Al-Mīzān

An Exegesis of the Qur'an

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī

Translated by: ʿAllāmah Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī

Edited by: Tawheed Institute Australia

Volume 11
Second Edition (2023)

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English translation
Second Edition 1445/2023

Translated from the original Arabic titled: *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾan*,
Beirut, 1393/1973 (3rd ed.)

Published by Tawheed Institute Australia Ltd.
Sydney, Australia
www.tawheed.com.au

In the Name of Allah,
the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds;
the Beneficent, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgment;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we beseech
for help;
Guide us in the straight path;
The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed
favors,not of those against whom Thou art
wrathful, nor of those who are astray.

O' Allah! send Your blessings to the head of
Your messengers and the last of
Your prophets,
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send Your blessings to all Your
prophets and envoys.

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Arabic Transliteration Key

Arabic Letters	Transliteration	Arabic Letters	Transliteration
ا	ā	ع	ʿ
ب	b	غ	gh
ت	t	ف	f
ث	th	ق	q
ج	j	ك	k
ح	ḥ	ل	l
خ	kh	م	m
د	d	ن	n
ذ	dh	ه	h
ر	r	و	w/ū
ز	z	ى	y/ī
س	s	ء	ʾ
ش	sh	ة	ah
ص	ṣ	ـَ	a
ض	ḍ	ـَ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُ	u
ظ	ẓ		

Publisher's Note

In an effort to make the text more accessible to English-speaking readers, the editors have chosen to use English names for the prophets and figures (as listed below but not limited to) and to use Anglicized terms that now appear in English dictionaries.

Ādam	Adam	Mūsá	Moses
Dāwūd	David	Sulaymān	Solomon
Hārūn	Aaron	Shuʿayb	Jethro
Ibraḥīm	Abraham	Yaʿqūb	Jacob
ʿĪsā	Jesus	ʾAyyūb	Job
Isḥāq	Isaac	Yūshaʿ	Joshua
Ismāʿīl	Ishmael	Yusuf	Joseph
Jibrāʾīl	Gabriel	Zakariyyā	Zachariah
Maryam	Mary	ʿUzayr	Ezra

Arabic terms and names have been transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES).

For ease of reading, glyphs and traditional honorifics such as "peace be upon him" or which are commonly used as a gesture of respect after the name of the Prophet Muhammad, the Imams, or other sacred figures have been omitted from this text. No disrespect is intended, and may God's peace and blessings be upon them all!

Foreword

In this eleventh installment of the English translation of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's "*Tafsīr, al-Mīzān*," we embark on a journey through fifty-one verses of Surah al-Ma'idah, beginning with the profound exposition of verse 55. This volume, covering up to verse 105, delves into the intricate layers of Qur'anic interpretation as ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī beautifully elucidates.

One of the most compelling discussions in this volume arises from ʿAllāmah's treatment of the term "*wilāyah*" found in verse 55. With meticulous reasoning, he persuades readers that "*wilāyah*" extends beyond the notions of friendship or help to encapsulate divine guardianship, a pivotal theme in Islamic principles.

The volume addresses a critical juncture in Islamic history with the exposition of verse 67, concerning the appointment of ʿAlī ibn Abi Tālib as the successor guardian (*waliyy*) after the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family). ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī underscores the indispensable role of *wilāyah* in Islam, arguing that it forms the very foundation upon which the messages and the continuity of the faith firmly stand. His commentary on this subject is both poignant and illuminating, offering a window into the soul of the Shi'a school of thought.

Further enriching this volume is the exploration of "*tawḥīd*," the concept of the oneness of God, as it is portrayed in the Qur'an and reflected upon in the traditions and annals of history. This discussion is not merely theological but extends into a scientific and historical analysis of the self, presented in nine comprehensive sections. This multifaceted approach offers readers an opportunity to understand *tawḥīd* not just as a religious principle but as a transformative force that shapes self-awareness and identity.

The Tawheed Institute Australia extends its profound gratitude to all individuals who have contributed their efforts to the realization of this volume. Their dedication has been instrumental in bringing the wisdom of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī to the English-speaking audience, furthering the understanding of Islamic teachings in the global community.

We hope that this volume will be a valuable addition to the libraries of

scholars and students alike and that it will continue to inspire thoughtful reflection and discussion on the rich heritage of Islamic thought.

Tawheed Institute Australia Ltd
January, 2024

About the Translator

The late ʿAllāmah Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī was one of the most sincere preachers of Islam and an active scholar, both when he was in Tanzania in the Bilāl Muslim Mission (an Islamic organization active in Tanzania), and also when he returned to his own country of India. In the way of spreading Islam he has rendered enormous services and had been most active.

ʿAllāmah Sayyid Saʿīd Akhtār Rizvī had written scores of books and booklets in English, Urdu and Swahili, many of which have been published; and some other titles which have been published by WOFIS. Some of his books have been translated and published by in French, Italian, Japanese, Thai, Indonesian, Hausa and other languages.

About the Author

The late Islamic scholar, thinker, and philosopher, ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī came from the celebrated Ṭabāṭabāʾī family of Tabriz. For the last three centuries, this family has produced generation after generation of renowned religious scholars in Azerbaijan (Iran). They are descendants of the second Imam, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī (peace be on both of them). The clan is also referred to with the title, al-Qāḍī.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad b. al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī. ʿAllāmah was born in Tabriz on 29 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1321/17 March 1904. His father died in 1330 (1912). The orphaned child grew up in Tabriz, and after completing his religious education there, around 1341 (1923), he went to Najaf (Iraq), the most important center of Shia religious learning.

In Najaf, he began his higher studies with such illustrious scholars as Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāʾīnī al-Gharawī (1277–1355/1860 or 1861–1936), the son of Shaykh al-Islām ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, and Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī (1296–1361/1878–1942), the son of al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Ḥasan, Muʿīn al-Tujjār.

These two were among the most prominent scholars in the Shia world. They were among the most prominent scholars not only in the fields of Shia jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence, but in all Islamic subjects. Their opinions and theories are still followed today. Each founded his own school of thought and trained thousands of Shia scholars and jurists; and all the *marājiʿ al-taqlīd*[1] of the Shia world, to this day, are their students. Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Iṣfahānī was a philosopher, unsurpassed in his time; a man of literature; and a poet in Arabic and Persian; he was a genius whose achievements made others look up to him as their ideal. Shaykh Nāʾīnī, with his bold opinions and decrees in the political and social life of the Muslim *umma*, has carved for himself a niche in history.

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1 The highest authorities of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) whose rulings are followed by others. (Pub.)

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was much influenced by these two teachers, particularly by al-Iṣfahānī, in the development of his thought and knowledge. A third influence was that of al-Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Jaʿfar Khwānsārī (1313– 80/1895 or 1896–1961), the son of al-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Mūsáwī, known as "the mathematician." ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was proud to have studied mathematics with him, and also wrote a book on higher mathematics, in which he applied some special theories of his teacher.

ʿAllāmah studied philosophy and metaphysics from al-Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī Bādkūbahʾī; the latter was a student of al-Sayyid Riḍā, who studied with al-Sayyid Mūsá, a well-known teacher of philosophy and related subjects. In the fields of ethics and spirituality, ʿAllāmah received his training from his relatives, al-Sayyid ʿAlī al-Qāḍī (1285–1366/1869–1947), a well-known scholar who established a school of spiritual and ethical training which still flourishes today.

All these influences combined to create in ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī a well-balanced academic and spiritual personality. He was a well-respected authority on religious subjects of jurisprudence and its fundamentals; a philosopher of independent views and new theories; and an inspired model of ethical and spiritual perfection. He not only taught morality, but also lived it. Yet it is also correct to state that his scholarship was overshadowed by his fame and prestige as a philosopher and a spiritual man.

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī returned to Tabriz in 1353/1934, where he was welcomed as a religious scholar. There he spent his time teaching higher philosophy to willing disciples—but it was a small place for his talents. In 1364/1945 he migrated to Qum, the most important center of religious education in Iran. In Qum, he remained engaged in imparting the knowledge of ethics, philosophy, and the exegesis of the Qurʾan to those students who had already attained a high level of erudition. There he remained until his death on Sunday, 18 Muḥarram 1402/15 November 1981. May God bestow His mercy on him. Amen.

Many religious leaders of the present generation were and are among his students and disciples, the most famous being the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (1338–99/1920–79).

ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī's fame rests on his academic works—the most important being his great exegesis of the Qurʾan, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān.* It is said to be the foundation stone of the academic prestige

which ʿAllāmah al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī was accorded in the Muslim world.

Among his other works is *Uṣūl-i falsafah va ravish-i riʾalism* (Practical and Philosophical Principles of Realism). This book is a comparative study of Islamic philosophy and various modern anti-Islamic schools of thoughts, especially Marxism. His disciple, the late Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, annotated this work, thus making it easily accessible to the average man.

A third book, *Shiʿa dār Islām*, was first published in Persian; later it was published in English with the title, *Shiʾite Islam.* The ʿAllāmah wrote this book on the request of Professor Kenneth Morgan of Colgate University, to introduce Shiism to the West.

However, it is his *tafsīr, al-Mīzān* (published in 20 volumes in Arabic) which presents the true picture of the author's academic style and his way of thinking. In the preface to volume 1, the author outlines his plan, to explain the Qur'an with the help of the Qur'an itself. This he faithfully does, all the way through to the end of the *tafsīr*.

Chapter 5

Sūrah al-Mā'idah

almizan.org

Verses 55-56

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

(5:55-56) Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay the zakāt while they bow. And whoever takes Allah and His Messenger and those who believe for a Guardian, then surely the party of Allah are they that shall be triumphant.

The two verses, as you see, are placed between the verses that prohibit taking the People of the Book and the unbelievers for a helper or guardian. That is why a group of Sunnī exegetes has tried to join these two with the preceding and following verses in a single context; they have taken the whole group in one connotation, aiming to describe the believers' responsibility regarding people's *wilāyah* (in the meaning of helping), and prohibition of taking the Jews, the Christians and the unbelievers as a helper. It confines the *wilāyah* to God, His Messenger, and those believers who establish prayers and pay the *zakāt* while they are bowing—they indeed are true believers. Thus it excludes the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease; leaving the true believers whose *wilāyah* is incumbent. The verse gives the same import that is shown by a collection of such verses as: *... and Allah is the Guardian of the believers* (3:68); *The Prophet has a greater claim on the believers than they have on themselves, ...* (33:6); (and

about the believers that) ... *these are guardians of each other* ... (8:72); *And* (*as for*) *the believing men and the believing women, they are guardians of each other* ... (9:71).

(According to these exegetes) the verse under discussion makes God, His Messenger and the believers *awliyā'* (here meaning 'helpers') of the believers.

However, there remains the difficulty of the circumstantial clause, *while they bow*, which is attached to the clause, *and pay zakāt*. They have tried to remove this difficulty by taking the bowing in a metaphorical sense, that is, they submit themselves to God; or they are financially in a low position, etc. The verse then would mean: The Jews, the Christians and the hypocrites are not your guardian; rather your Guardians are God, His Messenger and those believers who keep up prayers and pay *zakāt*, and they in all this surrender themselves to God with total obedience—or, they pay *zakāt* while they themselves are poor and in straitened condition.

This was the explanation given by them. But if you ponder on, and look minutely at the two verses and the ones surrounding them, and then at the general position of this chapter, you will reach at a conclusion different from what they have said.

The first thing which goes out of the window is their claim that all these verses were in a single context, and that their aim was to describe the *wilāyah* of helping and to differentiate between genuine and false help.

Yet, although it is accepted that the chapter was revealed during the last days of the Messenger of God in the Last Pilgrimage; but it is also accepted that all its verses were not revealed together in one go; the chapter contains verses which were doubtlessly revealed before that time, and their meanings clearly show it; also their narrated reasons of revelation support their earlier revelation. If a verse is placed before or after a verse it does not give an indication that their context is one; nor does some affinity between one verse and another show that they were revealed together or in one context.

Moreover, the preceding verses (*O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends* ...) forbid the believers to befriend the Jews and the Christians, and put to shame the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease for hastening to them and looking after their interests, without addressing the Jews and the Christians or talking to them. And the following ones (*O you who believe! Do not take for guardians those who*

take your religion for a mockery and a joke, from among those who were given the Book before you and the unbelievers ... Say: "O People of the Book! Do you find fault with us (*for aught*) *except that we believe in Allah , and that most of you are transgressors?*"), prohibit taking them for guardians and expose their condition by ordering to talk to them and put them to shame for hypocrisy and transgression. Thus the aims in the two sets of verses are quite different from each other. So, how the context can be the same?

Apart from that you have seen in the commentary of preceding verses (*O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends*) that the *wilāyah* in the meaning of help is not suitable in that context, and the particularities of those verses and especially the words, they are friends of each other, and the words, and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them, are not appropriate for such interpretation. Establishing the *wilāyah* of help and its undertaking between two nations does not make the two into one nation nor does it attach one to the other. Also such prohibition cannot be justified by saying that, they are friends of each other. Such expressions can only be used when the aim is to prohibit *wilāyah* of love, because love creates psychological and spiritual blending of both parties, and permits each to affect psychological and spiritual management in the other's life affairs; it brings two groups near each other in character and activities in a way that obliterates national characteristics.

Not only that. It is not correct to count the Prophet as a *waliyy* (in the meaning of helper) of the believers, while its opposite is correct. This help which is given by God, and the Qur'an mentions it in many of its verses, is the help in religion. Accordingly, it is proper to say that the religion belongs to God—in the meaning that He has established it and laid down its *sharī'ah*. Thus the Prophet or the believers or both together are exhorted to help it, or some helpers are invited to help God regarding the laid down religion, as He says: *The disciples said: "We are helpers of Allah" ...* (61:14); *if you help Allah, He will help you ...* (47:7).

And when God made a covenant with the prophets: *"... you must believe in him, and you must aid him."* (3:81); apart from other many such verses.

Also, it is proper to say that the religion belongs to the Prophet—in the meaning that it is he who has called to it and conveyed it to us, for example. Or that the religion belongs to God and His Messenger—in the

meaning of legislation and guidance, and so they call people to help it or praise the believers for helping it; as God says: *... so those who believe in him and honor him and help him, ...* (7:157); *... seeking grace of Allah and* (*His*) *pleasure, and assisting Allah and His Messenger ...* (59:8); *... and those who gave shelter and helped ...* (8:72); and other such verses.

Likewise, it is proper to say that the religion belongs to the Prophet and the believers—in the meaning that they are obligated to follow its laws and act on it, so it is said that God is their Guardian and Helper; as He says: *... and surely Allah will help him who helps Him ...* (22:40); *Most surely We help Our messengers, and those who believe in this world's life and on the day when the witnesses shall stand up* (40:51); *... and helping the believers is ever incumbent on Us* (30:47), apart from other such verses.

However, it is not correct to ascribe the religion to the believers alone, thus making them as principal and putting the Prophet aside, and then to count the Prophet as their helper in their affairs; because whatever religious dignity there is, the Prophet has the lion's share in it. That is why we do not find a single example in the Qur'an where the Prophet has been mentioned as the believer's helper. Far be it from the divine speech to neglect the noble divine decorum in any instance.

This is one of the strongest proofs that wherever the Qur'an ascribes *wilāyah* to the Prophet, it means the *wilāyah* of Guardianship and authority or that of love and affection, as God says: *The Prophet has a greater claim on the believers than they have on themselves, ...* (33:6); *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, ...* (5:55); note that the verse is addressed to the believers, and as you have been told earlier, there is no meaning in counting the Prophet their *waliyy* in the meaning of helper.

It is now clear that these two verses are different in the context from the preceding ones, even if we take the *wilāyah* in the meaning of helping; do not be confused by the clause: *the party of Allah are they that shall be triumphant*, because triumph and prevailing points to the connotation of helping as much as it does to that of management and authority, and to that of love and affinity. Triumph of religion—the topmost desire of the people of religion—takes place when the believers attach themselves to God and His Messenger with any possible means. God has clearly announced it to them in His words: *Allah has written down: "I will most certainly prevail, I and My Messengers"* (58:21); *And certainly Our word has already gone forth*

in respect of Our servants, the messengers: most surely they shall be the assisted ones, and most surely Our host alone shall be the victorious ones (37:171–3).

On top of all, there are a lot of traditions declaring that these two verses were revealed about ʿAlī when he gave his ring in charity while he was praying. Thus these verses are reserved for him and are not general. God willing, many of those traditions will be quoted under "Traditions."

If such numerous and so many accumulated traditions pointing to the reason of revelation can be ignored while explaining a verse, then obviously not a single verse could be explained with the help of the narrated reasons of revelation in the whole Qur'an. Therefore, there is no justification for generalizing the two verses and claiming that they point to the believers' friendship with one another.

However, the exegetes have objected to these traditions—although they should not have done so in view of their overwhelming numbers—as follows:

First: These traditions are against the context of the verses that apparently point to the *wilāyah* of help, as mentioned above.

Second: They want us to use plural and mean singular; because according to them, the clauses: *those who believe and those*, refer to ʿAlī, but language does not support it.

Third: According to these traditions, *zakāt* would mean giving the ring in charity, and it is not called *zakāt*.

Based on these objections, they say that the verses are general, and restrict the *wilāyah* to the group mentioned therein. The hypocrites were hastening to the help of the People of the Book and emphasizing its importance; so God forbade it and said that their only helpers are God, His Messenger and the true believers, rather than the People of the Book and the hypocrites. There would remain only one difficulty: that this explanation did not agree with the apparent meaning of the conditional clause: while they bow. But, it could easily be removed if we took it in its metaphorical meaning, that is while they are humble before God; or even when they are themselves in need, in wretched condition.

This was the gist of their objections. But if you meditate on this and other similar verses, you will see that none of these stands on its legs. As for the verse's position in the context of the ones denoting *wilāyah* of help: You have seen that those verses do not give the meaning of help; and even

if we suppose that the previous verses denote that meaning, this verse is not compatible with it.

As for the problem of using plural and meaning singular: You have seen the detailed reply to it under the verse of *Mubāhalah* (3:61) in volume three of this book.[1] Also, it was explained there that there were two ways of speaking:

(1) To use a plural word and mean a singular, a single entity.

(2) To describe a general proposition, using a plural word, in order that it may be applied to all suitable candidates, even if at present there be only one person or thing to which it could be applied.

The language rejects the first style; but the second one is very common in use.

Would that I knew what they would say about the verse: *O you who believe! Do not take My enemy and your enemy for friends: would you offer them love while they deny what has come to you of the truth, ... would you manifest love to them? ...* (60:1). It is undoubtedly known that the verse refers to one man, Ḥāṭib b. Abī Balta'ah, when he corresponded with the Quraysh.

Or about the verse: They say: *"If we return to Medina, the mighty will surely drive out the meaner therefrom ..."* (63:8). It is well known that the speaker one man, was ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl.

Or about the verse: *They ask you as to what they should spend ...* (2:215), and the questioner was one man.

Or about the verse: (*As for*) *those who spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and openly, they shall have their reward ...* (2:274). It is narrated that the spender was ʿAlī or Abū Bakr.

There are a lot of such verses in the Qur'an.

A very strange phenomenon appears before our eyes when we look at the clause: (they say), "We fear lest a calamity should befall us;" ... (5:52). The speaker was ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy, according to the narrated reason of revelation, which the objectors themselves do accept; and it is in between the verses under discussion. (They find no difficulty in applying the plurals to one man in this clause!)

It could be said that in the above mentioned verses there were many

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1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol.6. (Trans.)

people who agreed with that one person's views, or were pleased with their action; therefore God has used plurals in order that it may cover the doer together with those who agreed with him. However, it would show that using a plural for a single person was justified if there was a good reason for it. The verse under discussion too would come into this category; as it would prove that the religious nobilities—including the said *wilāyah*—is not confined to one person to the exclusion of the others; rather it only depends on priority in sincerity and deeds.

Moreover, all the narrators of these traditions were the companions of the Prophet and their disciples who were with them in that very era. All of them were pure Arabs whose language was not perverted and whose tongues were not mixed up. If such usage was not allowed in the speech and people were not familiar with such expressions, they would not have accepted these narrations, rather they would have been the first to put forward this objection; but none of them is on record to speak against it on this ground.

As for the saying that charity of a ring is not called *zakāt*: It should be kept in mind that the use of the word, *zakāt*, specifically in its terminological meaning took place in the Muslim's expressions after the Qur'an laid it down as an obligatory act of religion; but in its literal sense it covers that terminological meaning and other spending altogether. When it is used without any restriction or joined with keeping up prayer, it indicates spending the property for the sake of God. See, for example, what God has mentioned regarding the previous prophets: He says about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: *... and We revealed to them the doing of good and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of zakāt*, (21:73); and He says about Ishmael: *And he enjoined on his family prayer and zakāt, and was one in whom his Lord was well pleased.* (19:55); *and He quotes Jesus saying in the cradle: ... and He has enjoined on me prayer and zakāt so long as I live* (19:31). And it is known that their *sharī'ah* did not have the *zakāt* of wealth as we understand it in Islam.

Likewise, look at the following verses, which were revealed in Mecca in the early days of prophethood when the *zakāt* (as we know it) was not legislated yet: *He indeed shall be successful who pays zakāt, and remembers the name of his Lord and prays* (87:14–15); (*He*) *who gives away his wealth for zakāt* (92:18); *Those who do not give zakāt and they are unbelievers in*

the hereafter. (41:7); *And who are givers of zakāt* (23:4). Would that I knew what the Muslims understood from the word, *zakāt*, in these verses!

Even the verse of *zakāt* itself: *Take alms out of their wealth, you would cleanse them and purify them thereby, and pray for them; surely your prayer is a relief to them* ... (9:103), shows that *zakāt* is a sort of alms and charity, and it has been named *zakāt* (lit: purification) only because charity cleanses and purifies in general; and then its was predominantly used for that particular alms.

All of it clearly shows that there is no hindrance in calling general alms and spending in the way of God as *zakāt*. Also it is evident that there is no reason for interpreting the word, bowing, in metaphorical sense. Similarly, there is no reason to look for far-fetched justifications as to why God used in the beginning of the verse the word: your Guardian, in singular and brought in its predicate: those who believe, in plural. Think over it.

Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe: al-Rāghib has said: "*al-Walā'* and *al-Tawālī* denote that two or more things are so positioned as nothing extraneous comes between them. Metaphorically it is used to indicate proximity in place, or affinity, or friendship, and in help, or in belief. *al-Wilāyah* is help, and/or management of affairs. It has been said that *al-walāyah* and *al-wilāyah* both are one like *al-dalālah* and *al-dilālah* denote this meaning, and both are used as *nomen agentis*, that is guardian /manager; and as *nomen patientis*, that is, one whose affairs are managed. A believer is called *waliyy* of God, but nowhere is he referred to as *mawlā* of God; while God is called *waliyy* of the believers, as well as their *mawlā*."

Further he says: "They say, *tawallī* when used without any preposition, gives the meaning of *wilāyah*, indicating that it is related to the nearest objective; they say, 'I turned my ears/eyes/face to so-and-so'. God says: *... so We shall surely turn thee to a qiblah which thou shalt be pleased with; turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it* ... (2:144); but when it is followed by preposition *min* (from) clearly or implied, it means turning away and leaving the proximity."

Apparently, man perceived the proximity (pointed to by *wilāyah*) first of all physically in bodies and their places and times; then it was borrowed for immaterial nearness, opposite to the above mentioned idea. We know that primitive man began his perceptive journey with the material things

perceived through the five senses and was involved with them long before thinking about rational propositions and immaterial ideas and their related things.

When *wilāyah*—a special proximity—is affected in spiritual/immaterial affairs, it follows that *waliyy* has a right and an authority over the *mawlā* which others do not have (except through him). All such managemental aspects that may be delegated to another will automatically be taken over by the *waliyy*, e.g. the *waliyy* of a deceased person. The estate, which the deceased used to manage by right of ownership, his heir, has the right to manage it by *wilāyah* of inheritance. Likewise, the guardian of a minor manages that minor's financial affairs by *wilāyah* of guardianship; and the helper manages the affairs of the helped one strengthening him in his defence; and God is the Guardian (*Waliyy*) of His servants and manages their affairs in this world and the hereafter—there is no guardian except Him. So God is the Guardian of the believers, inasmuch as He manages the affairs of their religion through guiding, calling, and helping them and so on. And the Prophet is the Guardian of the believers inasmuch as he has the authority to decide between them, for them and against them through legislation and judgement. Likewise, the *ḥākim* (ruler, judge) is the guardian of the people over whom he rules within his jurisdiction. The same is the case with other examples of *wilāyah*, like that of emancipation, covenant, protection, neighborhood and divorce; similarly, the *wilāyah* of a cousin, of love and of a designated successor, and so on.

Also, His word: *they shall turn* (*their*) *backs to you* (33:15), that is, they shall turn their backs towards the war and ignore its demands.

And His word: *you turned back* (5:92), that is, you turned away from accepting it; you faced its opposite direction by turning away from it.

In short, looking at *wilāyah* in its different usages, we get the meaning of a sort of proximity that gives its subject some authority of management and possession of planning.

Looking at the context of the verse under discussion: "Only God is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe," we find that the meaning of *wilāyah* (guardianship) for all the guardians is the same, because "God, His Messenger and the believers," have all been ascribed to one word: "your Guardian," and clearly guardianship of each has the same meaning. This is also supported by the clause at the end of the second verse:

then surely the party of Allah are they that shall be triumphant, as it indicates or clearly shows that all the guardians are the party of God, because they are under His Guardianship; thus the guardianship of the Messenger and of those who believe sprout from the root of God's Guardianship.

God has ascribed to Himself the following aspects of *wilāyah*:

The Authority Over Creation: (*al-Wilāyah al-Takwīniyyah*) Through this authority, He manages everything and disposes the creatures' affairs as He pleases and in whatever way He pleases. He says: *Or have they taken guardians besides Him? But Allah is the Guardian, ...* (42:9); *... you have not besides Him any guardian or any intercessor; will you not then mind?* (32:4); *... Thou art my guardian in this world and the hereafter ...* (12:101); *... he has no guardian after Him ...* (42:44). *The same is the implication of the verses: ... and We are nearer to Him than his life-vein.* (50:16); *... and know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart, ...* (8:24).

Possibly related to it is the *wilāyah* of help which God ascribes to Himself: *That is because Allah is the Protector of those who believe, and because the unbelievers shall have no protector for them* (47:11); *... then surely Allah it is Who is his Guardian, ...* (66:4); and the same connotation is seen in the verse: *... and helping the believers is ever incumbent on Us* (30:47).

The Authority Over Legislation: (*al-Wilāyah al-Tashrī'iyyah*) God has ascribed to Himself this *wilāyah*, which concerns the believers' religious affairs: Legislation of the laws, guidance, advice, help and so on. He says: *Allah is the Guardian of those who believe; He brings them out of the darkness into light ...* (2:257); *... and Allah is the Guardian of the believers* (3:68); *and Allah is the Guardian of the pious ...* (45:19) The same is the theme of the verse: *And it is not for a believing man nor for a believing woman to have any choice in their affairs when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter; and whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he surely strays off a manifest straying* (33:36).

This is what God has described related to His *wilāyah*, and it concerns the authority over creation and authority over legislation. You may also call them the real *wilāyah* and the *wilāyah* from a subjective point of view.

Then God has mentioned for His Prophet the *wilāyah* which is reserved for him, and it is *al-Wilāyah al-Tashrī'iyyah*: The Prophet has the right and authority to legislate the laws, call people to it, train the *ummah* accordingly, rule over them and decide in their affairs. God says:

The Prophet has a greater claim on the believers than they have on themselves, (33:6). The same is the connotation of the verses: *Surely We have revealed the Book to you with the truth that you may judge between people by means of that which Allah has taught you ...* (4:105); *and most surely you guide to the right path* (42:52); *... a Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, ...* (62:2); *that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, ...* (16:44); *... obey Allah and obey the Messenger ...* (4:59); *And it is not for a believing man nor for a believing woman to have any choice in their affairs when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter;* (33:36); *And that you should judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their low desires, and be cautious of them, lest they seduce you from part of what Allah has revealed to you ...* (5:49). It has been mentioned that God has not ascribed to the Prophet the *wilāyah* of help for the *ummah*.

In short, the Prophet has the *wilāyah* over the *ummah*, inasmuch as he leads them to God, rules over them, judges and decides in all their affairs. It is incumbent on them to obey him unconditionally. In this way, his *wilāyah* springs from God's *wilāyah*, in the meaning of the authority of legislation. In other words, the Prophet has precedence over them as they are bound to obey him, because his obedience is God's obedience. Thus, his *wilāyah* is the *wilāyah* of God, as some previously quoted verses prove, for example: *obey Allah and obey the Messenger* (4:59); *And it is not for a believing man, nor for a believing woman to have any choice in their affairs when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter ...* (33:36), apart from other such verses.

It is this meaning of *wilāyah* as ascribed to God and His Messenger, which is bestowed on the believers in the verse under discussion, when it says: "Only God is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe." You have seen that the context proves that it is only one *wilāyah*, and it belongs to God directly and to the Messenger and to those who believe indirectly by permission of God.

Had the *wilāyah* ascribed to God in this verse, been different from that ascribed to those who believe, it was more appropriate, in order to avoid any confusion, to bring another word of *wilāyah* before mentioning "those who believe," as God has done in similar situations. For example,

He says: *Say: "A hearer of good for you* (*who*) *believes in Allah and believes the faithful ..."* (9:61). The word: "believes", has been repeated because its connotations in the two clauses are different. A similar style was used in the verse: *... obey Allah and obey the Messenger ...* (4:59), as was explained in volume five of this book.[1]

Moreover, the word: "Your Guardian", is singular and is ascribed to, "those who believe", that is plural. According to the exegetes, it is because *wilāyah* here has a single meaning, and it directly belongs to God and as for the Messenger and the believers, it is indirectly, through God.

It is clear from above that the restriction in "Only" aims at confining the *wilāyah* to those mentioned in the verse. It removes the possible misunderstanding that it might cover those who are mentioned and also the others. There is another possibility that this restriction negates the *wilāyah* of all persons other than those mentioned therein.

Qur'an: those who keep up prayers and pay the *zakāt* while they bow: It gives further particulars of "those who believe"; "while they bow" is the conditional clause attached to the subject hidden in the verb "pay." *al-Rukū'* is a particular position of body which is found in human beings only. An old man with bent back is called *al-Rāki'* (one who bows down). In the language of *sharī'ah* it is the name of a special position in worship. God says: ... (*those*) *who bow down, who prostrate* ... (9:112). Symbolically it represents humility and submission (to God); but in Islam it is not allowed except in prayer, contrary to prostration.

And because it shows humility and submission, the word is sometimes used to allude to general humbleness, or to poverty and need, because a man in straitened circumstances usually shows humility before others.

And whoever takes God and His Messenger and those who believe for guardian, then surely the party of God are they that shall be triumphant: *al-Tawallī* (to take as a friend); "those who believe" points to the preceding: those who believe, together with their attributes: those who keep up prayers and pay the *zakāt* while they bow; the clause: "then surely the party of God are they that shall be triumphant," is put in the place of the complement for the preceding conditional clause, although it is not the complement. Rather, the speech has put the major premise in place of

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol.8. (Trans.)

the conclusion, in order to show the reason of the proposition. In effect it says: Whoever takes God and His Messenger and those who believe for guardian, shall be triumphant, because he belongs to the party of God and the party of God are they that are triumphant. It is an allusion that they are the party of God.

al-ḥizb, according to al-Rāghib, is a group having coarseness, ruthlessness, and harshness. God has described His party in another place in the Qur'an, with a nearly similar theme and has ascribed success to them. He says: *You shall not find a people who believe in Allah and the latter day befriending those who act in opposition to Allah and His Messenger, even though they were their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers or their kinsfolk; these are they into whose hearts He has impressed faith, and whom He has strengthened with a spirit from Him: and He will cause them to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, abiding therein; Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him; they are Allah's party: now surely the party of Allah are the successful ones* (58:22).

al-Falāḥ means victory and acquisition of the object of desire, that is, triumph. It is this triumph and success, which God has promised to bestow on the believers—this being His best promise to them. He says: *successful indeed are the believers* (23:1). Many verses have this theme; and in all of them the promise is without any condition; obviously it denotes unrestricted victory and unconditional success. Gaining felicity, adhering to truth, vanquishing infelicity and refuting falsity in this world and the hereafter: In this world through good life which is found in virtuous society made up of the friends of God, in an earth cleansed from the friends of Satan, based on piety; and in the hereafter, in neighborhood of the Lord of the worlds.

Examining Narrations

(1) (al-Kulaynī) narrates from ʿAlī b. Abraham, from his father, from Ibn Abī ʿUmayr from ʿUmar b. Udhaynah, from Zurārah, al-Fuḍayl b. Yasār, Bakīr b. A'yan, Muḥammad b. Muslim, Barīd b. Mu'āwiyah and Abu al-Jārūd, all together from Abū Ja'far that he said, "God, the Mighty, the Great, ordered His Messenger (to have) *wilāyah* of ʿAlī, and revealed to him: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep*

up prayers and pay the zakāt while they bow; and the *wilāyah* of *ulu al-amr* (was made) incumbent; and they did not know what it was. So God ordered Muḥammad that he should explain the *wilāyah* to them as he had explained prayer, *zakāt*, fast and *ḥajj*. "When this (order) came to him from God, the Messenger of God, felt uneasy and he was afraid lest they turn away from their religion and call him a liar; so his breast was straitened and he appealed to his Lord, the Mighty, the Great. Then God, the Mighty, the Great, revealed to him: *O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message, and Allah will protect you from the people*. So he complied with the order of God, Mighty is His remembrance! He stood up (to announce) the *wilāyah* of ʿAlī on the day of Ghadīr Khumm; so he called out: The Prayer of Congregation; and (then) ordered the people that those present should convey (this message) to those who were not there."

(2) ʿUmar b. Udhaynah said, "All (the above-mentioned narrators) except Abu al-Jārūd (further) said, Abū Jaʾfar said, "This was another duty, and the *wilāyah* was the last of the obligations. Then God, the Mighty, the Great, revealed: This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you and chosen for you Islam as religion." Abū Jaʾfar said, "God, the Mighty, the Great, says, 'I shall not send to you any duty after this; I have perfected for you all the duties.'"" (*al-Kāfī*)

(3) *al-Burhān* and *Ghāyat al-marām* narrate from al-Ṣadūq through his chain, from Abu al-Jārūd, from Abū Jaʾfar that he said about the word of God, the Mighty, the Great: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe*, "A group of the Jews accepted Islam; there were among them ʿAbdullāh b. Salām, Asad, Thaʾlabah, Ibn Yāmīn and Ibn Ṣūriyā. So they came to the Prophet and said, 'O Prophet of God! Verily Moses had made Yūshaʾ b. Nūn his *waṣiyy* (successor); so who is your *waṣiyy*? O Messenger of God! And who is our Guardian after you?' Then this verse was revealed: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, who keep up prayers and pay zakāt while they bow*.

"The Messenger of God, said (to the companions): 'Stand you up.' They stood up and came to the mosque, and lo! A beggar was coming out. The (Prophet), said, 'O beggar! Has anyone given you anything?' He said, 'Yes. 'This ring.' (The Prophet) said, 'Who gave it to you?' He said, 'Gave it to me that man who is praying.' He (the Prophet) said, 'In which position had he given it to you?' He said, 'He was bowing.' So the Prophet, said, '*Allahu Akbar*,' and the people in the mosque said, '*Allahu Akbar*.'

"Then the Prophet, said, "Alī is your *waliyy* (Guardian) after me.' They said, 'We are pleased with God as the Lord, and with Muḥammad as the Prophet, and with ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib as the Guardian.' So God, the Mighty, the Great, revealed: *And whoever takes Allah and His Messenger and those who believe for a guardian, then surely the party of Allah are they that shall be triumphant*."

(4) al-Qummī narrates from his father, from Ṣafwān, from Abān b. ʿUthmān from Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī, from Abū Jaʾfar that he said, "While the Messenger of God, was sitting with a group of the Jews including ʿAbdullāh b. Salām, this verse was revealed to him. So the Messenger of God went out to the mosque, and a beggar came before him. Then (the Messenger) said, 'Has anyone given you something?' He said, 'Yes. That one who is praying.' So the Messenger of God came there and lo! It was ʿAlī." (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: al-ʿAyyāshī also has narrated it in his *al-Tafsīr* from the same Imam.

(5) al-Shaykh writes: Narrated to us Muḥammad b. Muḥammad, that is, al-Mufīd; he said: narrated to us Abu al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Kātib; he said: narrated to us al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Zaʾfarānī; he said: narrated to us Abū Isḥāq Abraham b. Muḥammad al-Thaqafī; he said: narrated to us Muḥammad b. ʿAlī; he said: narrated to us al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbdillāh al-ʿAnbārī, from ʿAbdu al-Raḥmān b. al-Aswad al-Kindī al-Yashkurī, from ʿAwn b. ʿUbaydillāh, from his father, from his grandfather Abū Rāfiʾ, that he said, "I went, one day, to the Messenger of God, while he was asleep and a snake was in, a side of the house; but I did not like to kill it lest I awake the Prophet, and I thought that (probably)

revelation was being sent to him, so I laid between him and the snake, and said (to myself): 'If there was any evil from it (the snake), it would come to me, not to him.'

"So I was (there) a little while, and the Prophet woke up, and he was reciting: O*nly Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe* until he came to the end of the verse. Then he said, 'Praise be to God Who completed for 'Alī His favor, and congratulations to him for the grace of God which He has bestowed on him.' Then he said to me, 'What are you doing here?' So I informed him about the snake, he said to me, 'Kill it.' So I killed it. Then he said to me, 'O (Abū) Rāfi'! What will be your position when a group will fight against 'Alī and he will be on right and they on wrong? To fight them, is a right of God (on His creatures), Mighty is His name! So whoever could not (fight, he should hate them) by his heart; there is nothing beyond God.' So I said, 'O Messenger of God! Pray to God for me that if I find them He should strengthen me to fight them.'" (Abū Rāfi') said, "Then the Prophet, prayed for me; and said, 'Verily, every prophet had a trustee, and verily, my trustee is Abū Rāfi.' "

He said, "When people did *bay'ah* of 'Alī after 'Uthmān, and Ṭalḥah and al-Zubayr proceeded (against him), I remembered the saying of the Prophet. So I sold my house at Medina and a piece of land (I had) at Khaybar; and I came out my sons—and –myself with the Leader of the Faithful in order to be martyred in his army. But I could not reach him until he returned from Baṣrah. And I went with him to Ṣiffīn; I fought in his presence in Ṣiffīn and also in Nahrawān. I remained with him constantly until 'Alī was martyred. I returned to Medina, and I had neither any house there nor any land. So al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī gave me a land in Yanbū', and divided for me a part of the house of the Leader of the Faithful; and I lived in it with my dependents." (*al-Amālī*)

(6) al-'Ayyashī narrates through his chain from al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, from his father Zayd b. al-Ḥasan, from his grand father that he said,"I heard 'Ammār b. Yāsir saying, 'A beggar stood near 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, while he was bowing in a supererogatory prayer; so he pulled out his ring and gave it to the beggar. Then the Messenger

of God came and was informed of it. Then this verse was revealed to the Prophet: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay zakāt while they bow* (to the end of the verse). So the Messenger of God recited it before us, then said, "Anyone whose *mawlā* (guardian) am I, ʿAlī is his *mawlā*; O God! Be friend of him who is his friend, and be enemy of him who is his enemy."'" (*al-Tafsīr*)

(7) Also, al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from al-Mufaḍḍal b. Ṣāliḥ, from some of his companions, from the Fifth or Sixth Imam that he said, "When this verse was revealed: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe*, it proved troublesome to the Prophet as he was afraid that the Quraysh would accuse him of lying. So, God revealed: O Messenger! *Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord* (to the end of the verse). So he carried it out on the day of Ghadīr Khumm." (*ibid.*)

(8) Also, he narrates from Abū Jamīlah, from some of his companions, from either of the two Imams that he said, "Indeed the Messenger of God, said, 'Verily God revealed to me to love four: ʿAlī, Abū Dharr, Salmān and al-Miqdād.'" (The narrator says:) "I said, 'Well, with all that multitude of the people, was not there anyone who knew this matter?' (The Imam) said, 'Certainly; (there were) three.' I said, '(When) these verses were revealed: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, and: Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you: was there no one to ask about whom they were revealed?*' He said, 'For that reason (perdition) came to them, they were not asking.'" (*ibid.*)

(9) al-Ṣadūq narrates through his chain from Abū Saʾīd al-Warrāq, from his father, from Jaʾfar b. Muḥammad, from his father, from his grandfather, in the *ḥadīth* of adjuration of ʿAlī against Abū Bakr when Abū Bakr acquired caliphate; and ʿAlī mentioned his excellent virtues to Abū Bakr, and described the clear wordings of the Messenger of God concerning his appointment; so he said inter alia, "I adjure you by God; is it I who have the *wilāyah* from God, (joined) with the *wilāyah* of the Messenger of God, in the verse of the *zakāt* of the ring, or you?" (Abū Bakr) said, "Nay! It

is for you." (*Ghāyāt al-marām*)

(10) al-Shaykh narrates through his chain from Abū Dharr, the *ḥadīth* of adjuration of the Leader of the Faithful against ʿUthmān, al-Zubayr, ʿAbdu al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf and Saʾd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, on the day of consultation, and his arguments against them with the clear declarations of the Messenger of God—and everyone of them was confirming what he was saying. And he had said inter alia, "Is there anyone among you—except me—who had paid *zakāt* while he bowed; and the verse was revealed about him: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay zakāt while they bow*?" They said, "No." (*al-Majālis*)

(11) Abu al-Ḥasan al-Thālith ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Hādī wrote an epistle to the people of Ahwāz when they had asked him about Compulsion and Delegation. He wrote in it, inter alia:

"The *ummah* unanimously agrees, without any difference at all, that the Qur'an is truth, there is no doubt in it, according to the belief of all sects. Therefore, when they unite on it they are on the right, and they are guided aright to confirm what God has revealed, because the Prophet has said, 'My *ummah* shall not unite on error.' He has thus told us that what the (whole) *ummah* agrees upon and some of them are not in discord with others on it, is the truth. This is the (true) connotation of this *ḥadīth*; not what the ignorant ones say in its interpretation; nor that which the enemies have said: negation of the order of the Book, following the commands of forged traditions and vain narrations, and following the perilous and ruinous desires which go against the clear verdict of the Book and confirmed meanings of clear and brilliant verses. And we pray to God that He should help us for *ṣalāt* and guide us to good conduct."

Then he said:

"Therefore, when the Book testifies for the truth and actuality of news, then a group of the *ummah* refutes it and argues against it by one of those forged narrations, they become lost in error because of its rejection and refutation. The most correct *ḥadīth* is that whose truth is known from the Book. For example, the

hadīth of the Messenger of God which is unanimously agreed upon by all, that he said, 'Indeed I am leaving behind among you two caliphs: the Book of God and my Progeny, as long as you adhere to them both you shall never go astray after me, and they shall never separate from each other until they come to me on the *ḥawḍ* (reservoir)'. And there is another wording narrated from him in the same meaning, 'Indeed I am leaving among you two precious (or weighty) things: the Book of God and my Progeny (who are) people of my house, and they shall never separate from each other until they come to me on the reservoir, as long as you adhere to them both you shall never go astray.'

"We find evidence of this *ḥadīth* in clear words in the Book of God, like His word: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay zakāt while they bow.* Then the traditions of the scholars in this respect unanimously point to the Leader of the Faithful that he gave his ring in alms while he was in *rukū'*; so God appreciated it from him and revealed the verse about him.

"Then we find that the Messenger of God, distinguished him from his companions by (saying) this word: 'He whose guardian am I, 'Alī is his guardian; O God! Be friend of him who is his friend, and be enemy of him who is his enemy'; and by his word: ' 'Alī shall repay my debt and fulfil my promise; and he is my successor over you after me'; and by his word when he appointed him as his successor in Medina and he said, 'O Messenger of God! Are you leaving me (to look after) women and children?' So he, said, 'Are you not pleased that you have the same position with me as Aaron had with Moses, except that there is no prophet after me?'

"Thus we know that the Book testifies verifying these traditions and confirming this evidence; therefore the *ummah* is bound to acknowledge them, because these traditions agree with the Qur'an. So when we find them in agreement with the Qur'an, and find the Qur'an in agreement with these traditions, and proving them, then to follow them becomes a duty which no one will transgress except the people of enmity and mischief." (al-Ṭabrisī, *al-Iḥtijāj*)

(12) The Leader of the Faithful said, inter alia, in a *ḥadīth*:

"The hypocrites said to the Messenger of God, 'Is there any duty pending which your Lord intends to impose on us after all that has already been laid down? So you (better) tell (it to us) so our souls may be at rest that now nothing else is pending.' So God revealed in this respect: Say: 'I exhort you only to one thing' (34:46), that is, the *wilāyah*. Then God revealed: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay zakāt while they bow*; and there is no difference in the *ummah* that on that day no one gave *zakāt* while bowing, except one man." (*ibid.*)

(13) al-Mufīd narrates from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Jesus, from al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Jawharī, from al-Ḥasan b. Abi al-'Alā' that he said, "I said to Abū 'Abdillāh, 'The successors, is their obedience incumbent?' He said, 'Yes. They are those (about whom) God has said: *Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you*; and they are those (about whom) God has said: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay zakāt while they bow.*'" (*al-Ikhtiṣāṣ*)

Author's comment: (al-Kulaynī) has narrated it in *al-Kāfī* from al-Ḥusayn b. Abi al-'Alā' from the same Imam; and has also narrated another tradition of the same meaning from Aḥmad b. 'Īsā, from the same Imam.

The chain of various narrations of what was revealed about 'Alī ends at all the Imams, because they are the people of one house, and their affair is one.

(14) al-Tha'labī has written in his *al-Tafsīr*: Informed us Abu al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim al-Faqīh; he said: narrated to us 'Abdullāh b. Aḥmad al-Sha'rānī; he said: informed us Abū 'Alī Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Razīn; he said: narrated to us al-Muẓaffar b. al-Ḥasan al-Anṣārī; he said: narrated to us al-Sariyy b. 'Alī al-Warrāq; he said: narrated to us Yaḥyā b. 'Abdi al-Ḥamīd al-Jummānī, from Qays b. al-Rabī', from al-A'mash, from 'Abāyah b. al-Rab'ī; he said: narrated to us 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās (may God be pleased with him), while he was sitting at the rim of Zamzam, saying: "The Messenger of God said"—when a man wearing a turban came there. Now, whenever

Ibn ʿAbbās said, "The Messenger of God said," that man also said, "The Messenger of God said."
So, Ibn ʿAbbās said to him, "I ask you by God! Who are you?" (The narrator) said, "Then he removed the turban from his face and said, 'O people! Whoever knows me, he knows me; and whoever does not know me, then I am Jundab b. Junādah al-Badrī Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī. I heard the Messenger of God by these two (ears), else they should become deaf, and I saw him by these two (eyes), else they should become blind, (while) he was saying, "'Alī is the leader of the righteous ones and the killer of the unbelievers; helped is he who helps him and forsaken is he who forsakes him." Indeed I prayed one day the prayer of *ẓuhr* with the Messenger of God. A beggar asked in the mosque but no one gave him anything. So the beggar raised his hand to the heavens and said, "O God! Be (my) witness that I asked in the mosque of the Messenger of God, but nobody gave me anything"; and ʿAlī was in *rukū'*, so he pointed out to him with his right little finger, and he had a ring in it. So the beggar came forward till he took the ring from his little finger; and all this was in the sight of the Prophet. When he finished his prayer, he raised his head towards the heavens and said, "O God! Moses had asked You saying: *'O my Lord! Expand my breast for me, and make my affairs easy to me, and loose the knot from my tongue,* (*that*) *they may understand my word, and give to me an aider from my family, Aaron, my brother, strengthen my back by him, and associate him* (*with me*) *in my affair'* (20:25–32). So You revealed for him a speaking Qur'an: *We will surely strengthen your arm with your brother, and We will give you both a power, so that they shall not reach you; with Our signs;* (28:35). O God! And I am Muḥammad, Your Prophet, and Your chosen one. O God! So expand my breast for me, and make my affairs easy to me, and give to me an aider, ʿAlī; strengthen my back by him."'"
Abū Dharr said, "The Messenger of God, had not finished his words when Jibrīl came to him from near God, the High, and said, 'O Muḥammad! Recite.' He, said, 'What should I recite?' He said, *'Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay zakāt while they bow.'"*

(15) The book *al-Jam' Bayna al-Ṣiḥāḥi al-Sittah* (by Zarīn, vol.3, *tafsīr* of the chapter of "The Table") quotes under the verse: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger*, from Ṣaḥīh al-Nasā'ī, from Ibn Salām that he said, "I came to the Messenger of God, and we said, 'Verily our people became our enemy when we accepted the truth of God and His Messenger, and they swore that they would not talk to us.' Then God revealed: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay zakāt while they bow*.

"Then Bilāl called *ādhān* for *ẓuhr* prayer, and people stood up praying; some were prostrating and some bowing, some asking God; when a beggar (came there) begging; and ʿAlī gave (him) his ring while he was bowing. So the beggar informed the Messenger of God. Then the Messenger of God recited before us: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay zakāt while they bow. And whoever takes Allah and His Messenger and those who believe for a guardian, then surely the party of Allah are they that shall be triumphant.*"

(16) Ibn al-Maghāzilī al-Shāfi'ī narrates explaining the words of God, *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger*: "Informed us Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿUthmān; he said: 'informed us Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Abraham b. Shādhān al-Bazzāz by permission; he said: narrated to us al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-ʿAdawī; he said: narrated to us Salamah b. Shabīb; he said: narrated to us ʿAbd al-Razzāq; he said: informed us Mujāhid from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said about the word of God: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay zakāt while they bow*, that it was revealed about ʿAlī. (*al-Manāqib*)'"

(17) Also, he narrates: "Informed us Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ṭāwān; he said: 'informed us Abū Aḥmad ʿUmar b. ʿAbdillāh b. Shawdhab; he said: narrated to us Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-ʿAskarī al-Daqqāq; he said: narrated to us Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān; he said: narrated to us Abraham b. Muḥammad b. Maymūn; he said: narrated to us ʿAlī b. ʿĀbis; he said: Abū Maryam and I called on ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAṭā'. Abū Maryam said (to him): "Narrate to ʿAlī the *ḥadīth* which you had narrated to me from Abū Ja'far." He

said, "I was sitting near Abū Ja'far, when passed by him the son of ʿAbdullāh b. Salām. I said, 'May God make me your ransom! Is he the son of him who had knowledge of the Book?' He said, 'No. Rather it is your companion, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib about whom were revealed verses of the Book of God, the Mighty, the Great: *and he who has knowledge of the Book* (13:43); *Is he then who has with him clear proof from his Lord, and a witness from Him recites it* (11:17); *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe*.'" (5:55). (*ibid.*)

(18) al-Khaṭīb al-Khwārazmī has narrated the correspondence between Mu'āwiyah and ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, in which the latter writes inter alia: "You certainly know, O Mu'āwiyah! What (God) has revealed in His Book, of the verses, which are recited regarding (ʿAlī's) excellent virtues, which no one shares with him. For example, *the word of Allah, the High: They fulfil vows* (76:7); *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay zakāt while they bow* (5:55); Is he then who has with him clear proof from his Lord, and a witness from Him recites it (11:17); and God, the High, has said: ... *men who are true to the covenant which they made with Allah* (33:23); and God, the High, has said to His Messenger: *Say: 'I do not ask of you any recompense for it except the love of* (*my*) *near relatives'* (42:23)."

(19) al-Khaṭīb narrates through his chain, from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from Ibn ʿAbbās, that he said, "'Abdullāh b. Salām came with some of his people who had believed in the Prophet, and they said, 'O Messenger of God! Our houses are far away, indeed; and we do not have any place for assembly or discussion except this place (of yours); and when our people saw that we had believed in God and His Messenger and had accepted his veracity, they abandoned us and swore to themselves that they would not sit with us, nor enter into a marriage-tie with us or talk with us; and it has proved very hard for us.' So the Prophet said to them: '*Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay zakāt while they bow*.'

"Then the Prophet, went out to the mosque and some people were standing (in prayer) and others bowing. (The Prophet) saw

a beggar; and he said to him, 'Has anyone given you anything?' He said, 'Yes, a golden ring.' The Prophet said to him, 'Who has given it to you?' He said, 'That one standing (in prayer)'—and he pointed with his hand to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. Then the Prophet said, 'In which position he gave (it) to you?' He said, 'He gave to me while he was in *rukū'*' Then the Prophet said: '*Allahu Akbar*', and then recited: *And whoever takes Allah and His Messenger and those who believe for a guardian, then surely the party of Allah are they that shall be triumphant.*"

Then Ḥassān b. Thābit composed and recited (the following poem):

O Abu al-Ḥasan! May my soul be your ransom, and my life-blood!
As well as every slow and fast in (the way of) guidance!
Will my praise and of (your) lovers go in vain? But praise for God's sake is never lost.
So it is you, who gave while bowing,
The souls of the people are your ransom! O the best bowing one!
Your blessed ring; O the best Master,
And the best buyer and the best seller!
So God revealed about you, the best *wilāyah*,
And made it clear in decisive *sharī'ah*. (*ibid.*)

(20) al-Ḥamawaynī (al-Ḥamū'ī) narrates through his chain from Abū Hadbah Abraham b. Hadbah that he said, "Informed us Anas b. Mālik that a beggar came into the Mosque and he was saying, 'Who will lend to the Rich, the Trustworthy (God)?' And ʿAlī was bowing, indicating by his hand to the beggar to take off the ring from his hand. (Anas) said, 'Then the Prophet said, "O ʿUmar! It became incumbent." (ʿUmar) said, "May my father and mother be your ransom! O Messenger of God! What became incumbent?" He said, "The Garden became incumbent for him. By God! He (the beggar) did not take it off from his hand, but he removed him from every sin and every fault."'"

(21) al-Ḥamawaynī narrates through his chain from Zayd b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, from his father, from his grandfather that he said, "I heard ʿAmmar b. Yāsir—may God be pleased with him—saying, 'A beggar stood near ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and he was in *rukū'* of a

supererogatory prayer; so he removed his ring and gave it to the beggar. Then he came to the Messenger of God and informed him of it. Then this verse was revealed to the Prophet: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay zakāt while they bow*. So the Messenger of God recited it; then said, "Anyone whose *mawlā* am I, ʿAlī is his *mawlā*."""

(22) al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Nuʾaym narrates from Abu al-Zubayr, from Jābir (may God be pleased with him) that he said, " ʿAbdullāh b. Salām came (to the Prophet) with a group, complaining that people have avoided them since they have entered into Islam. So the Messenger of God said, 'Find for me a beggar.' We entered the Mosque and a beggar came near him. (The Prophet) said to him, 'Has anyone given you anything?' He said, 'Yes, I passed by a man who was bowing, so he gave me his ring.' (The Prophet) said, 'Come along and show me.'" (Jābir said) "So we proceeded and lo! ʿAlī was in standing position, so (the beggar) said, 'This.' Then was revealed: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger* ..."

Also, al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Nuʾaym narrates from ʿAwf b. ʿUbayd b. Abū Rāfiʾ, from his father, from his grandfather that he said, "I went to the Messenger of God while he was asleep, and a snake was in a side of the house; but I did not like to kill it lest I awake the Prophet. So I lay between him and the snake, so that if there was anything (that is, snake-bite) it would be in me, not him. Then (the Prophet) woke up and he was reciting this verse: *Only Allah is your Guardian and His Messenger.* He said, 'All praise is for God!' Then he came to my side and said, 'Why do you lie here?' I said, 'Because of the presence of this snake.' He said, 'Go to it and kill it.' So I killed it.

"Then he took my hand and said, 'O Abū Rāfiʾ'! There shall soon be after me some people who would fight ʿAlī; to fight them will be a right of God; so whoever could not fight them by his hand, he should do so by his tongue, and whoever could not do so, then by his heart; there is nothing beyond that."

Author's comment: The traditions showing that the two verses were revealed concerning the alms of the ring are very numerous. We have

quoted some of them here from al-Baḥrānī's book, *Ghāyat al-marām*; and it has been ascertained that they are found in the books al-Baḥrānī has copied from. We have quoted only as much as was necessary to show various versions of the story.

Many companions have narrated this event, like Abū Dharr, Ibn ʿAbbās, Anas b. Mālik, ʿAmmār, Jābir, Salamah b. Kuhayl, Abū Rāfiʾ, ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ and ʿAlī and al-Ḥusayn; and likewise al-Sajjād, al-Bāqir, al-Ṣādiq, al-Hādī and other Imams of Ahl al-Bayt.

Also, *Aimmat al-Tafsīr* (those who explain the verses with the help of traditions) unanimously agree on this tradition, without any objection, like Aḥmad, al-Nasāʾī, al-Ṭabarī, al-Ṭabarānī, ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd and many other *ḥuffāẓ* (memorizers) and Imams (masters) of *ḥadīth*. The scholars of *ʿilmu al-kalām* (Islamic Theology) have accepted the tradition. The jurisprudents have used it as their proof in the question of a great many actions during prayer, and in the discussion whether supererogatory alms is called *zakāt*.

And the outstanding luminaries of language and literature from among the exegetes, like al-Zamakhsharī in his *al-Kashshāf* and Abū Ḥayyān in his *al-Tafsīr* have not disputed regarding the application of this verse on this tradition; nor has any narrator showed any reluctance in it—and they were the people of this language.

Therefore, no attention should be paid to someone's claim that the tradition of the revelation of this verse in connection with the story of the ring is forged and fabricated. Some of them, like Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, have transgressed the limit and claimed *ijmāʾ*, unanimity, that this tradition was forged. It is really an astonishing claim. You have, however, seen in the preceding commentary, what is the truth and reality of this matter.

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Verses 57–66

The verses forbid taking those who make mockery of God and His communications as friends from among the People of the Book and unbelievers, and enumerate some of their evil characteristics including their breaking the covenants of God and so on—the matters related to the theme of this chapter, that is, exhorting people to keep their promises and covenants and showing the demerit of going against promises, etc.

All the verses seem to be revealed in one context, although possibly some of them could have particular reason of revelation.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَكُمْ هُزُوًا وَلَعِبًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَالْكُفَّارَ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

(5:57) O you who believe! Do not take for friends those who take your religion for a mockery and a joke, from among those who were given the Book before you and the unbelievers; and fear Allah if you are believers.

al-Rāghib has said:

> "*al-Huz'* (secret jest,) sometimes it is used for something like a jest." Then he says explaining *la'ib*: "They used the verb, *la'ib* when the doer does not have a correct purpose for his action."

A thing is taken as a mockery and a jest when it is not handled seriously showing that it does not deserve any attention. Similarly, a thing is taken as a plaything and a joke when it is not intended for a correct reasonable purpose, is rather taken for some unrealistic themes. Thus, they take the religion for a mockery and a joke in order to show that it only serves some false motives—incorrect and not seriously. Had they taken it to be truly a religion or believed that its Legislator and the Caller to it as well as the Believers in it were truly serious and paid them the respect due to them, they would not have placed them in this place. So, they take the religion as a mockery and a jest to show that the religion does not have any reality or any

established position; it is merely a toy to be played with and jested about.

It appears from the above that:

First: Those, whose friendship is forbidden, are described as "those who take your religion for a mockery and a joke"; this description points to the reason of this prohibition. As described earlier, friendship entails spiritual mingling and management of personal and sociological affairs. Obviously, a *waliyy* (friend) will not treat as a joke or a mockery those things, which his friend respects and pays honor to, and considers it more distinguished and honorable than everything, even his own self. It is therefore necessary not to take such a person as a friend and not to let him interfere in one's spiritual and physical affairs.

Second: The verse is very appropriately addressed to: "you who believe," as it stands parallel to: "those who take your religion for a mockery and a joke"; also there is the fine point of the genetic construction: "your religion", (as it emphasizes their strong connection with the religion of Islam, and puts them on guard against the enemies' manipulation).

Third: The clause: "and fear God if you are believers," puts a sort of emphasis to the preceding wordings: "Do not take for friends those who take your religion for a mockery and a joke," by repeating it in a more inclusive and comprehensive wording. Obviously, a believer who adheres to the cord of true faith cannot be pleased if the matters he believes in were to be taken as a mockery or joke. Therefore, these people, if they are truly associated with belief and are attached to the religion, are bound to fear God regarding those inimical persons and not to take them as friends.

Another possibility: The clause: "and fear God if you are believers", may point to the verses which were revealed a little earlier, example, *and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them.* The meaning then will be as follows: Be afraid of God in taking them for a friend if you are not one of them. But the first meaning is more manifest.

وَإِذَا نَادَيْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ اتَّخَذُوهَا هُزُوًا وَلَعِبًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

(5:58) And when you call to prayer they take it as a mockery and a joke; this is because they are a people who do not understand.

It confirms the preceding statement that the unbelievers take the

religion of those who believe for a mockery and a joke. The call for prayer refers to the *adhān*, which was laid down in Islam before the legislation of the daily five prayers. It is said that *adhān* has not been mentioned in the noble Qur'an except in this place.[1]

The pronoun "it" in "they take it" refers to the prayer, or to the verbal noun, the call, understood from the verb: "when you call to prayer." A pronoun referring to a verbal noun may be brought in either gender.

The end clause: "this is because they are a people who do not understand," puts their misdeed in its true perspective. It says that they take the prayer or the *adhān* for a mockery and a joke because they are a people devoid of understanding. As such, they cannot appreciate the underlying spiritual realities behind the pillars and acts of religious worship—the reality of servitude, the benefits of attaining nearness to God and convergence of life's happiness in this world and the hereafter.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ هَلْ تَنْقِمُونَ مِنَّا إِلَّا أَنْ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَنَّ أَكْثَرَكُمْ فَاسِقُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

(5:59) Say: "O People of the Book! Do you find fault with us (for ought) except that we believe in Allah and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed before, and that most of you are transgressors."

al-Rāghib has said: "*al-Naqam* and *al-Naqim* mean to deny, to vengeance through tongue or punishment; God says: and they did not find fault except because God and His Messenger enriched them out of His grace (9:74); *and they did not take vengeance on them for aught except that they believed in Allah* ... (85:8); *do you find fault with us* ... (5:59)"

al-Naqimah is punishment, God says: *Therefore We inflicted retribution on them and drowned them in the sea* (7:136).

Thus, the verse under discussion means: Do you deny or dislike from us anything except that we believe in God and in His revelation while you are transgressors. It is as people say: Do you disavow me for anything except that I am a chaste person and you are profligate? Do you find any fault with me except that I am wealthy and you are poor? This verse speaks in

1 This is a strange claim. See ch.62, vr.9: *O you who believe! When the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah* ... (Trans.)

the same vein. Do you find any fault with us except that we are believers and most of you are transgressors?

Some people have said that the end clause gives the reason of their hostility; in other words, it means: You do not deny or dislike anything from us except because you are transgressors.

... that we believe in God and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed before: It means, what has been revealed to us and to you. But the former revelation was not ascribed to them as an allusion against them—As they did not fulfil the covenant they had made with God and did not follow the commandments given in their books, so it was as though their books were not sent to them nor were they qualified to receive them.

The meaning: We do not differentiate between one revealed Book and the other; as such we do not make any difference between the messengers of God. It is an adverse allusion to the People of the Book that they make difference between one messenger and another and say: *We believe in some and disbelieve in others*. Also they used to say: *Avow belief in that which has been revealed to those who believe* (*in*) *the first part of the day, and disbelieve* (*at*) *the end of it,* (3:72). God says: *Surely those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers and desire to differentiate between Allah and His messengers, and say: We believe in some and disbelieve in others and desire to take a way between* (*this and*) *that. These it is that are truly unbelievers, and We have prepared for the unbelievers a disgraceful chastisement* (4:150–1).

قُلْ هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِشَرٍّ مِنْ ذَٰلِكَ مَثُوبَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۚ مَنْ لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ وَغَضِبَ عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهُمُ الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيرَ وَعَبَدَ الطَّاغُوتَ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ شَرٌّ مَكَانًا وَأَضَلُّ عَنْ سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ ﴿٦٠﴾

(5:60) Say: "Shall I inform you of (him who is) worse than this in retribution near Allah? (It is he) whom Allah has cursed and brought His wrath upon, and of whom He made apes and swine, and he who served the Satan; these are worse in place and more erring from the straight path."

The exegetes have said that in this verse God tells His Messenger to address those who indulged in mockery of religion in a just manner

bringing himself down to their level, in order to complete his proof against them. He should tell them that if they hated the believers because they believed in God and in what He has revealed to His messengers, then they should hate their own selves too, because they are worse in place and more erring from the straight path, because they are afflicted by divine curse and were changed into apes and swine and indulged in the worship of Satan. If they do not hate their own selves in spite of all these demerits and evils, which invite hatred, they have no reason to hate those who are less liable to any evil or demerit. They are the believers keeping firm on their belief—this is in case we accept that their belief in God and His Books is an evil; but we know that it can never be an evil. Accordingly, *al-mathubah* (lit. reward) here means recompense; probably it has been borrowed for end result and inseparable attribute, as may be inferred from the phrase: "near God", which qualifies the clause: "worse than this in retribution"; because what is near God is permanent, enduring and unchangeable; and God has adjudged and ordered it. He says: ... *and what is with Allah is enduring* ... (16:96); ... *there is no repeller of His decree* ... (13:41). This recompense or retribution is therefore an enduring one because it is near God or with God.

There is a sort of reversal in this speech. Normally, the sentence should have been framed as follows: Being cursed and transmuted and worshipping the Satan is worse and more erring than believing in God and His Books. But here it says: He whom God has cursed and changed into apes and swine is worse in place and more erring. It puts the described person in place of the description or attribute; and this style is common in the Qur'an, as God says: ... *but righteousness is the one who believes in Allah and* ... (2:177).

In short, the verse declares that if our belief in God and His revealed Books was an evil in your opinion, then I inform you of what is more evil than that, and which you should truly hate, and it is the characteristics, which is found in yourselves.

It has been said by some that the demonstrative pronoun: "this", in the phrase: "worse than this", points to the entire community of the believers that is mentioned in the clause: "find fault with us." Accordingly the speech will be straight forward, without any reversal; and the meaning will be as follows: Shall I inform you of his who is worse than the believers, so that you should find fault with him? It is you yourselves who were afflicted

with divine curse and transmutation and worshipped the Satan.

Someone else has said that, the pronoun, "this", in the phrase: "worse than this", points to the verbal noun, to find fault, to hate, which is hidden in the verb, "do you find fault with us." The meaning: Should I inform you of what is worse than this fault-finding and hate of yours in retribution? Well, it is what you have been afflicted with, that is, the divine curse, transmutation, and so on.

وَإِذَا جَاءُوكُمْ قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَقَدْ دَخَلُوا بِالْكُفْرِ وَهُمْ قَدْ خَرَجُوا بِهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

(5:61) And when they come to you, they say: "We believe"; and indeed they come in with disbelief and indeed they go forth with it; and Allah knows best what they concealed.

Here God exposes their hidden hypocrisy, and that they keep in their hearts what God is not pleased with—when they meet the believers. So He says: When they come to you they claim that they have believed while actually they come to you with disbelief and they go forth with the same disbelief. Their entry and exit both take place in the same one condition that is, disbelief without any change; they merely pretend to believe while God knows what they concealed of treachery and perfidy.

Accordingly the clause: and indeed they come in with disbelief and indeed they go forth with it, means: Their condition in disbelief has not changed at all; the nominative pronoun, *hum* (they) has been added for emphasis, to show that disbelief has firmly taken root in their hearts.

It has been said that the said clause indicates that they take turns from one condition of disbelief to another.

وَتَرَىٰ كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَأَكْلِهِمُ السُّحْتَ ۚ لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ لَوْلَا يَنْهَاهُمُ الرَّبَّانِيُّونَ وَالْأَحْبَارُ عَنْ قَوْلِهِمُ الْإِثْمَ وَأَكْلِهِمُ السُّحْتَ ۚ لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

(5:62–63) And you will see many of them striving with one another to hasten in sin and exceeding the limits, and their eating of what is unlawfully acquired; certainly evil is that which they work. Why

> do not the learned men and the doctors of law prohibit them from their speaking of what is sinful and their eating of what is unlawfully acquired? Certainly evil is that which they work.

Apparently, the word "sin," indicates their rashly plunging into the religious verses revealed to the believers, and speaking regarding religion's cognition what would cause disbelief and transgression, as is shown by the clause: "their speaking of what is sinful," in the latter verse.

Accordingly, the three items, that is, sin, transgression, and eating of what is unlawfully acquired, encompass samples of their transgression in words and deeds. They indulge in verbal misdeeds (and it is the sin in words) and misdeeds in actions—and it can be either against other believers (and it is transgression against them) or against their own selves, e.g. their eating what is unlawfully acquired, like interest, bribe, and things like that. Then God has condemned all these activities and said: "Certainly evil is that which they work." Then He has strongly rebuked their doctors of law and scholars of religion for their keeping silent and not prohibiting them from committing these grave sins and misdeeds, although they are aware that these are very grave sins. So He says: "Why do not the learned men and the doctors of law prohibit them from their speaking of what is sinful and their eating of what is unlawfully acquired? Certainly evil is that which they work."

The former verse speaks of "sin and exceeding the limits, and their eating of what is unlawfully acquired," while the latter speaks only of "what is sinful and their eating of what is unlawfully acquired." The omission of exceeding the limits in this verse indicates that sin and exceeding the limits are one and the same—sin is exceeding the divine limits verbally, which stands parallel to exceeding those limits in action, an example of which is seen in eating unlawful things.

Accordingly, the clause: "striving with one another to hasten in sin and exceeding the limits, and their eating of what is unlawfully acquired," aims at exposing their one fault of words (and it is sin and exceeding the limits) and another one of deeds, and it is their eating of what is unlawfully acquired.[1]

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1 *al-Musāra'ah* puts emphasis on *al-sur'ah* (hastening); it is opposite of *al-buṭ'* (tardiness). The difference between *al-sur'ah* and *al-'ajalah* (hurrying), as

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ ۚ غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُوا بِمَا قَالُوا ۘ بَلْ يَدَاهُ
مَبْسُوطَتَانِ يُنْفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَلَيَزِيدَنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ
رَبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا ۚ وَأَلْقَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ
كُلَّمَا أَوْقَدُوا نَارًا لِلْحَرْبِ أَطْفَأَهَا اللَّهُ ۚ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا ۚ وَاللَّهُ
لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

(5:64) And the Jews say: "The hand of Allah is tied up!" Their hands shall be shackled and they shall be cursed for what they say. Nay, both His hands are spread out, He expends as He pleases; and what has been revealed to you from your Lord will certainly make many of them increase in inordinacy and in unbelief; and We have put enmity and hatred among them till the Day of Resurrection; whenever they kindle a fire for war Allah puts it out, and they strive to make mischief in the land; and Allah does not love the mischief makers.

The Jews did not agree that the laws of religion could be abrogated, and, for this reason, they did not accept that Torah could be abrogated; rather they rebuked the Muslims for abrogation of some of their laws. Similarly, they did not accept the doctrine of *al-badā'* in matters of creation, as is seen from various Qur'anic verses. We have elaborated this topic in the first volume of this book, under the verse: *Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it,* (2:106). Some light has been thrown on it in other places too.

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inferred from usage of these words is this: *al-sur'ah* is more relevant to the actions of body, while *al-'ajalah* is more concerned with activities of heart. It is not unlike the difference between *al-khuḍū'* (to bow, to defer) and *al-khushū'* (to submit, to be humble); and between *al-khawf* (fear) and *al-khashyah* (dread, apprehension). al-Rāghib has said: "*al-Sur'ah* is opposite of *al-buṭ'*; it is used in description of bodies and actions; it is said: *saru'a* (he hastened); its *nomen agentis* is *sarī'* (hastener); and (they say): *asra'a* and *musri'* in the same meanings."

It has been said that *al-musāra'ah* and *al-'ajalah* are synonymous; but *al-musāra'ah* is mostly used for good works; the use of this word here, although the context is of bad deeds, and *al-'ajalah* would have been more appropriate—is aimed at showing that they indulge in it as if they were doing a good work. But this seems far-fetched. (Auth.)

The verse: "And the Jews say: 'The hand of God is tied up!'" Might be referring to their above mentioned views; however, the following clause in their rebuttal: "Nay both His hands are spread out, He expends as He pleases", does not leave room for such interpretation. It rather shows that they had uttered these sinful words particularly with reference to sustenance:

Either they had said it especially about the believers, because generally they were afflicted with poverty and their condition was straitened. So, they talked in this way as a mockery against God, alluding that He does not have power to give riches to His believing servants nor can He rescue them from need and humiliation. But this opinion is not worthy of consideration, because the verse is in the chapter of "The Table", which was revealed (in the last years of the Prophet's life) when the Muslims enjoyed abundance of livelihood and lived a pleasant and luxurious life.

Or, they said it because of the famine and draught, which had made their lives miserable, disturbed their economic system, and lowered their standard of living, as appears from some of the traditions that explain the reason of revelation. But this explanation too does not agree with the context of the verses, because evidently the verses expose their various characteristics like their enmity and treachery against the Muslims whom they hated to the extreme. These verses do not allude to the sinful talks they had uttered regarding their own selves.

Or, they said it when they heard the Qur'anic verses, example: *Who is it that will lend to Allah a goodly loan* (73:20). So they said: "The hand of God is tied up! He is not able to obtain the necessary funds to spend in His requirements for propagating His religion and reviving His mission." They had said it as a mockery and a jest against God, as appears from some other traditions relating to the cause of revelation.

This explanation appears nearer to reality.

In any case, this ascription—that the hand of God was tied up and He was overpowered in His plans, when some adverse situation had developed—does not go against their religious teachings nor is it alien to the descriptions and comments found in the present Torah. According to Torah, there were many things which God was unable to do and which prevented Him from enforcing His will time and again, as strong persons hinder weaker ones in their activities. You may look at the stories of the

prophets, like Adam and others as they appear in Torah.

So, many aspects of their belief allow them to ascribe to God what is totally against the sanctity of His status, although in the present context they had uttered these words as a jest and mockery—we know that every action of a man emanates from some aspects of belief which he holds and which encourages him to do it.

"Their hands shall be shackled and they shall be cursed for what they say": It is an invocation of evil against them, of the same type which they had ascribed to God, and which went so clearly against His sanctity and sacredness—their declaration that God's hand was tied up and He has no power to do what he pleases. Accordingly, the clause: "and they shall be cursed for what they say", is in explanatory conjunction with the clause: "Their hands shall be shackled", inasmuch as their hands being shackled displays the divine curse on them, because God's speech is His action, and He curses someone only through penalizing him with punishment either in this world or the next. Thus, this curse means a punishment equal to shackling of their hands or more total and comprehensive.

Someone has opined that: "Their hands shall be shackled", is (not a curse, but) a statement showing that they have already been inflicted with chastisement because of their arrogance against God in saying: "The hand of God is tied up!" But the former interpretation is more understandable.

Nay, both His hands are spread out, He expends as He pleases: It is the rebuttal of their claim: "The hand of God is tied up!"

The sentence: "both His hands are spread out", is an allusion to His all-encompassing firmly rooted power; and such usage is very common.

God has said: "both His hands" (although the Jews had used singular in their talk, "The hand of God is tied up!") in order to show His complete and perfect power; as is the case in the verse: He said: *"O Iblīs! What prevented thee that thou shouldst do obeisance to him whom I created with My two hands? Art thou proud or art thou of the exalted ones?"* (38:75), as it indicates or rather clearly shows the use of perfect power in Adam's creation; or as they say: 'You do not have two hands on her, to emphasize absence of every power and every favor.'

The dictionaries often give various meanings for 'hand' other than the body organ, like power, strength, favor, ownership and so on. However, the fact remains that word was originally coined for the said organ, and

it is used in other meanings as allusion, because all other meanings have some affinity with various aspects of the hand, example: magnanimity and spending is related to it in its management and raising up or putting down.

Therefore, when the Book or Sunnah ascribes hand to God, its connotation changes with the context. For example, in the clauses: "both His hands are spread out (5:64)"; and: whom I created with My two hands (38:75), "hands" means power and its perfection; and in the clauses: ... *in Thine hand is the good* ... (3:26); *Therefore glory be to Him in Whose hand is the Kingdom of everything* ... (36:83); *Blessed is He in Whose hand is the Kingdom,* ... (67:1) and other such verses, "hand" means kingdom and authority; likewise, in the verse: *Be not forward in the presence of Allah and His Messenger* (49:1) the phrase means 'in the presence of' as translated above.

The clause, "He expends as He pleases" elaborates the clause, "both His hands are spread out."

... and what has been revealed to you from your Lord will certainly make many of them increase in inordinacy and in unbelief: The context shows that this and the sentences coming after it aim at elaborating the foregoing clauses, "And the Jews say: 'The hand of God is tied up!' Their hands shall be shackled and they shall be cursed for what they say."

The sentence under discussion indicates that their arrogance against God and their utterances like, "The hand of God is tied up!" are not something unexpected from them, because they have been steeped in transgression and disbelief from their earliest days; and it has emanated from their oppression and envy. When a man with such characteristics sees that God has given someone else excellence over him and bestows on that person estimable favors, his inordinacy and disbelief is bound to increase.

The Jews believed that they were lords, and the most developed nation of the world; they called themselves People of the Book, were proud of their doctors of law and scholars, and of their knowledge and wisdom; they called all other nations gentiles. Now, they saw that a Divine Book was revealed to a people who until then submitted to the Jewish knowledge and Book—as was the case between them and the Arabs in the Days of Ignorance. Then they looked in that Book and found it truly a Book revealed by God as a Guardian over all Divine Books of yore. They realized that it contained clear truth, sublime teaching, and complete guidance.

They felt that this Book would subdue them and put them to shame in the very field that was the source of their pride, that is, the knowledge, and the Book. Naturally, they became alarmed and outraged, and their transgression and disbelief increased.

Their increase in transgression and disbelief has been ascribed to the Qur'an inasmuch as no sooner had their unjust and envious souls seen the revelation of the Qur'an and realized the true knowledge and manifest Call contained in it, than they rose up in transgression and disbelief.

Moreover, God has often attributed in His Book guiding and causing to go astray to Himself. For example: *All do We aid—these as well as those—out of the bounty of your Lord, and the bounty of your Lord is not confined* (17:20); *And We reveal of the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers, and it adds only to the perdition of the unjust* (17:82). Causing someone to go astray—or something similar to it – is considered blameworthy, if it is done initially, without any cause. But if it done as a retribution of moral depravity or sins committed by the one gone astray, then there is nothing wrong in such causing to go astray; because the man's depravity has brought down the divine wrath on him as a recompense of his wrong-doings. As God says: *... but He does not cause to err by it* (*any*) *except the transgressors* (2:26); *... but when they turned aside, Allah made their hearts turn aside ...* (61:5).

Ultimately, the statement that the Qur'an increases in their inordinacy and disbelief, means that they are deprived of divine help, and God does not bring them out of their inordinacy and disbelief to submission to His will and acceptance of the true Call. This topic was explained in the first volume of this book under the verse: *but He does not cause to err by it* (*any*) *except the transgressors* (2:26).

Let us return to our original discussion. The verse: "and what has been revealed to you from your Lord will certainly make many of them increase inordinacy and in unbelief;" aims at removing any astonishment as to how could those people who called themselves the People of the Book and claimed to be the sons and beloveds of God, could dare to utter this contemptuous and insulting sentence that the hand of God was tied up.

They are most certainly steeped in inordinacy and disbelief, a trace of which is seen in this statement; and it is bound to be followed by signs after hideous signs; and this is what is inferred from the verb having the

prefix of the *la* of oath and suffix of the *nun* of emphasis.

The verse mentions inordinacy before disbelief, keeping in view the natural sequence, because disbelief is among the vestiges and results of inordinacy.

... and We have put enmity and hatred among them till the Day of Resurrection: The pronoun "them" refers to the Jews, as is evident from the position of the sentence within the talk relating particularly to the Jews, although it had initially covered the People of the Book in general. Accordingly, the enmity and hatred points to the discord and difference that is found in their various sects and schools of thought. God has pointed to it in various places in His Book; for example: And certainly We gave the Book and the Wisdom and the Prophecy to the Children of Israel, and We gave them of the goodly things, and We made them excel the nations. And We gave them clear arguments in the affair, but they did not differ until after knowledge had come to them, revolting among themselves; surely your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that wherein they differed (45:16–7), apart from other similar verses.

It seems that enmity points to the hate that is accompanied by transgression in action, and hatred indicates aversion of the heart, even if it does not show in action. The combination of the two in the verse indicates a hate that causes injustice against another party and the one, which does not reach that stage.

The clause: "till the Day of Resurrection", obviously shows that their *ummah* will continue up to the end of the world.

... whenever they kindle a fire for war Allah puts it out: To kindle a fire is to inflame it, and to put it out is to extinguish it. The meaning is clear. There is another possibility that the clause: "whenever they kindle a fire", explains the preceding clause: "and We put enmity and hatred ..." Thus the meaning will be as follows: Whenever they kindled a fire of war against the Prophet and the believers, God puts it out by reviving their internal discords and differences.

The context points to the divine decree that their endeavours in kindling the fire of war against the divine religion and against the Muslims (because of their belief in God and His signs) are bound to fail. However, it does not cover those wars, which the Jews might wage against the Muslims, not for religious motive, but because of politics, or because of ideas of racial

or national superiority.

... and they strive to make mischief in the land; and God does not love the mischief-makers: al-Sa'y (translated here as strive) literally means moving quickly, running; *fasādan* shows the motive of action, that is, to make mischief. However, God does not love the mischief-makers; and He will not leave them free to achieve what they want, so their endeavours to make mischief in the land are bound to fail. And God knows better.

All of this explains how their hands are tied up and how they are cursed because of their demeaning utterances; they shall never succeed in achieving what they aimed at by waging war after war against the Prophet and the Muslims, and for which they were continuously trying to make mischief in the land.

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَكَفَّرْنَا عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَأَدْخَلْنَاهُمْ جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٦٥﴾

(5:65) And if the People of the Book had believed and guarded (against evil) We would certainly have covered their evil deeds and We would certainly have made them enter gardens of bliss.

The talk again returns to the condition of People of the Book in general as was the case in beginning; and it ends on description of the favors they have missed in this world and the next—the gardens of bliss there and the happy life here.

The *taqwā* mentioned after belief means abstaining from the forbidden things and guarding against the sins which bring down divine wrath and chastisement of fire in their wake. Such sins are ascribing a partner to God and all those major sins, which God has threatened with fire. Accordingly, the evil deeds mentioned here which God has promised to cover would mean minor misdeeds; and it fits the theme of the verse: *If you avoid great sins which you are forbidden, We will expiate from you your* (*small*) *sins and cause you to enter an honorable place of entering* (4:31).

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ أَقَامُوا التَّوْرَاةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَأَكَلُوا مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ ۚ مِنْهُمْ أُمَّةٌ مُقْتَصِدَةٌ ۖ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ سَاءَ مَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

(5:66) And if they had kept up the Torah and the Gospel and that which was revealed to them from their Lord, they would certainly have eaten from above them and from beneath their feet; there is a party of them keeping to the moderate course, and (as for) most of them, evil is that which they do.

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The Torah and the Gospel mentioned here refer to the two Divine Books which the Qur'an says were revealed to Moses and Jesus (peace be on them), rather than the Old and the New Testaments which these people have got in their hands and which have reportedly been extensively manipulated and altered by succeeding generations.

Apparently, the clause: "that which was revealed to them from their Lord", refers to all scriptures attributed to various prophets, which these people have got, like the Psalms of David which the Qur'an calls Zabūr, and other such Books.

The opinion that this clause refers to the Qur'an is not sustainable, because the Qur'an with its *sharī'ah* has abrogated the laws of the Torah and the Gospel, and therefore there is no reason to count it with them and to express the desire that they should have kept those Books up together with the Qur'an which had abrogated them. May be some one would say that to follow the Qur'an is to follow also the Torah and the Gospel; for when one acts on the abrogating rules in Islam, one acts on the *sharī'ah* of Islam in its totality—which includes the abrogating and the abrogated rules together, because the divine religion is one, and its parts are not in conflict with one another; utmost that can be said is that some laws are temporary, are valid up to a fixed time without any contradiction. But this view is not correct, because God describes this act as "keeping up" that is firmly preserving something on its roots. Such expression is not suitable for abrogated laws per se; so the Torah and the Gospel could correctly be kept up at the time when they were not abrogated by any other *sharī'ah*; and the Gospel did not abrogate the *sharī'ah* of the Torah except in some minor aspects.

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Moreover, the clause: "that which was revealed to them from their Lord", refers to the Books, which were revealed to the Jews and the Christians, and we have never seen the Qur'an to be described as being revealed to them.

Obviously, this clause refers to the scriptures, which were revealed after

the Torah and the Gospel, including various kinds of revelations sent to the prophets of the Israelites, like the Psalms of David, etc. To keep those Books up means diligently obeying the divine laws contained in those Books, and believing the gnosis of genesis and return which God had described therein. It is a far cry from manipulating those truths through alteration, concealment, and abandonment. If they had properly kept up the Books they would certainly have eaten from above them and from beneath their feet.

The eating mentioned in this clause alludes to a life of ease and comfort, whether it is through eating or using some other luxuries. The use of "eating" for general management and unrestricted enjoyment is common in the language.

The clause, "from above them" indicates from the heaven, and "from beneath their feet" means from the earth. The sentence alludes that they would enjoy the blessings of the heaven and the earth, and would be encompassed by those blessings. It is the same theme which is given in the verse: *And if the people of the towns had believed and guarded* (*against evil*)*, We would certainly have opened up for them blessings from the heaven and the earth; but they rejected, so We overtook them for what they had earned* (7:96).

The verse proves that the belief and good deeds of the human species have an effect on the good of the creative system inasmuch as it has a connection with this species. So if this species behaved properly the whole system of the world would remain good, because it would fulfil what is necessary for a happy life of man—by repelling the misfortune and abundance of blessings.

Many other Qur'anic verses prove it in clear words: Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, so that they may return. Say: *Travel in the land, then see how was the end of those before; most of them were polytheists* (30:41–42); *And whatever affliction befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought ...* (42:30), apart from other such verses. We have mentioned in the second volume[1] of our book some matters relevant to the effects of human deeds.

... there is a party of them keeping to the moderate course, and (***as for***)

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol.3. (Trans.)

most of them, evil is that which they do: *al-Iqtiṣād* is to adhere to *al-qaṣd* (the middle course); thus the moderate group is the one which keeps to the middle course in religious affairs and submits to the commandments of God.

The talk is a fresh start to describe that all that has been attributed to them—their exceeding the limits imposed by God, their disbelief in divine signs, their affliction by divine wrath and the curse on their bands—portrays the condition of their majority; and that is why all these evils have been ascribed to them; however, there is among them a moderate group which is above these demerits. This is an example of the justice the divine speech contains, as it does not ignore anyone's right, and shows appreciation of reviving the affairs of truth however little it may be.

This reality has been alluded to in many preceding verses, but not so clearly; for example, the divine words: *... and that most of you are transgressors* (5:59); *And you will see many of them striving with one another to hasten in sin and exceeding the limit ...* (5:62); *and what has been revealed to you from your Lord will certainly make many of them increase in inordinacy and in unbelief* (5:64).

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Examining Narrations

(1) al-Qummī writes under the verse: And when they come to you they say: "We believe;" "It was revealed about ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy, when he pretended to accept Islam, while they had come in with disbelief. (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: The context clearly shows that these verses were revealed about the People of the Book, not about the hypocrites, except if this verse is claimed to be revealed alone.

(2) The same book says about the words: and indeed they go forth with it, that is, they went forth with disbelief, without faith. (*ibid.*)

(3) al-Kulaynī narrates through his chain from Abū Baṣīr, from ʿUmar b. Riyāḥ, from Abū Jaʾfar that he said, "I told him, 'I have been informed that you say that whoever divorced in contravention to *sunnah* you do not consider his divorce (to be) anything.' Abū Jaʾfar said, 'It is not I that say so; but God, the Mighty, the Great, says it. Why by God! Were we to give you legal opinion with injustice, we would have been worse than you. Verily, God says: Why

do not the learned men and the doctors of law prohibit them from their speaking of what is sinful and their eating of what is unlawfully acquired? (*al-Kāfī*)

(4) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from Abū Baṣīr that he said, "I said to Abū ʿAbdillāh, 'Verily, ʿUmar b. Riyāḥ thinks that you have said, "There is no divorce except with proof (that is, with two just witnesses)."'" Abū Baṣīr said that (the Imam, a.s.) said, "It is not I that have said so, but God, the Blessed, the Sublime, says it. Why, by God! Were we to give you legal opinion with injustice, we would have been worse than you. Verily, God says: Why do not the learned men and the doctors of law. (*al-Tafsīr*)

(5) al-Shaykh narrates through his chain from Ibn Abī ʿUmayr, from Hishām b. Sālim, from Abū ʿAbdillāh regarding the words of God, the High: And the Jews say: "*The hand of Allah is tied up*." "He said that they used to say, 'He has concluded all affairs.'" (*al-Majālis*)

Author's comment: al-ʿAyyāshī has narrated this connotation in his *al-Tafsīr* from Jacob b. Shu'ayb and Ḥammād from the same Imam.

(6) al-Qummī narrates (from the same Imam, a.s.) that he said, "They used to say, 'God has concluded all affairs; He does not bring forth other than that which He had ordained in the first ordination.' Therefore, God rebutted them and said: Nay, both His hands are spread out, He expends as He pleases, that is, He brings (something) forward and puts (another) back, and He increases and decreases; to Him belong *al-badā'* and volition." (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: al-Ṣadūq has narrated this theme in his *Ma'āni al-akhbār*, through his chain, from Isḥāq b. ʿAmmār, from the one who heard it, from al-Ṣādiq.

(7) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from Hishām al-Mashriqī from Abu al-Ḥasan al-Khurāsānī, (that is, al-Riḍā), that he said, "Indeed God is as He has described Himself, the One, on Whom all depend, the Light." Then he said, "Rather, both His hands are spread out." (Hishām says,) "I said to him, 'Well, does He have two hands like this?'—and I pointed with my hand to his hand. He said, 'If He were like this, He would have been a created thing.'" (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: al-Ṣadūq has narrated it in *al-ʿUyūn*, through his

chain from al-Mashriqī from the Imam.

(8) al-Ṣadūq narrates through his chain from Muḥammad b. Muslim that he said, "I asked Ja'far, and said, '(What is the explanation of) His word, the Mighty, the Great: *O Iblīs! What prevented thee that thou shouldst do obeisance to him whom I created with My two hands?* (38:75).' (The Imam), said, 'Hand in the language of Arabs is (used) for power and favor; He has said: *And remember Our servant David, the powerful* (38:17), (lit: owner of hands); and the heaven, We created it by hands, (that is, by power) and verily We are expanding (51:47); and He has said: and He strengthened them with a spirit from Himself (58:22);' (the Imam said) 'that is, He gave them strength; and it is said, "I owe that man a bright hand," that is, a boon and grace.'" (*Ma'āni al-akhbār*)

(9) al-Qummī writes in his *al-Tafsīr* about the word of God: And if they had kept up the Torah and the Gospel—that is, the Jews and the Christians—they would certainly have eaten from above them and from beneath their feet—from above them (alludes to) rain, and from beneath their feet, vegetation.

(10) al-'Ayyāshī narrates under the divine word: there is a party of them keeping to the moderate course, from Abu al-Ṣahbā' al-Kubrā that he said, "I heard 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (who) invited Ra's al-Jālūt and the Bishop of the Christians and said, 'I am going to ask you of a matter—and I know it better than you do—so do not conceal (it).' Then he called the Bishop of the Christians and said, 'I adjure you by God, Who sent down Gospel to Jesus, and put blessings on his foot, and (because of which, Jesus) healed the blind and the lepers, and removed the pain of the eye, and made for you birds out of clay and he informed you of what you ate and what you stored.' (The bishop) said, 'I would tell truth (even) for less than that.'
"So 'Alī, said, 'Into how many (sects) were the Israelites divided after Jesus?' He said, 'No, by God! Not even a single sect.' Then 'Alī said, 'You have told untruth. By God, that there is no god except Him! Indeed they had divided into seventy-two sects; all of them are in the Fire except one sect. Verily, God says: *there is a part of them keeping to the moderate course, and* (*as for*) *most of them, evil is that which they do; it is that which shall be saved*.'" (*al-Tafsīr*)

(11) The same book narrates from Zayd b. Aslam, from Anas b. Mālik, that he said, "The Messenger of God, used to say, 'The *ummah* of Moses divided into seventy-one sects, seventy of them were in the Fire and one in the Garden; and the *ummah* of Jesus into seventy-two sects, seventy-one of them is in the Fire and one is in the Garden; and my *ummah* will rise over the two sects together with one group in the Garden, and seventy-two (of their sects) (will go) to the Fire.' They (the companions) said, 'Who are they? O Messenger of God!' He said, 'The groups, the groups.'" (*ibid.*)

(12) Jacob b. Yazīd said, "Whenever ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, narrated this *ḥadīth* from the Messenger of God, he used to recite the (verse of the) Qur'an: And if the People of the Book had believed and guarded (against evil) We would certainly have covered their evil deeds ... evil is that which they do; and he also recited, and from among those We created, there is a group who guide with truth and they do justice with it—that is, the *ummah* of Muḥammad."

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Verse 67

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۖ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ
رِسَالَتَهُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

(5:67) O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message; and Allah will protect you from the people; surely Allah will not guide the unbelieving people.

The meaning of the verse in itself is clear. It contains an order in the form of threat to the Messenger to convey the message, and promises to protect him from the people.

If we ponder on the verse looking at the position it has been placed in, and look at the verses preceding and following it, you will see them exposing the condition of the People of the Book and admonishing and condemning them for their various transgressions, their crossing the limit and indulging in things prohibited by God and their rejection of divine communications. For example, the preceding verse says: *And if they had kept up the Torah and the Gospel and that which was revealed to them from their Lord, they would certainly have eaten from above them and from beneath their feet*; and the following one says: *Say: "O People of the Book! You have no ground to stand upon until you keep up the Torah and the Gospel and that which is revealed to you from your Lord;"* ...

Then ponder on the verse itself and see how its clauses are interlinked together. Now, you will be astonished, (and realize that this verse is not connected with the preceding or following verses).

Had this verse been connected to the preceding and following verses which deal with the People of the Book, it would have meant that the Prophet was ordered—in extremely harsh words—to deliver what God had revealed regarding the People of the Book; and the context would show that: what has been revealed to you from your Lord refers to what he was told to convey in the immediately following verse: *Say: "O People of the Book! You have no ground to stand upon until you keep up the Torah*

and the Gospel and that which is revealed to you from your Lord;"...

But the context of the verse itself rejects this interpretation. The clause: *and Allah will protect you from the people*, shows that the revealed order which the Prophet is urged to convey is a very important one; the delivery of which would put the life of the Prophet in peril or would cause the divine religion to fail in its aim. But the Jews or the Christians did not have such a power during the days of the Prophet as to put his life in danger to such an extent as to justify holding back or delaying its conveyance, until God gives him a promise to protect him from the people if he conveys the revealed order. Even in the early days of the Prophet's *hijrah* to Medina the People of the Book were not in a position to put his life in danger, although the Jews were fiercely opposed to him and their active opposition ultimately led to the battle of Khaybar, etc.

Moreover, this verse does not contain any tough order or any vehement word. The Prophet had delivered before that the verses, which were harder, sharper and much bitter than it for the Jews. Also, before that he was told to convey to the unbelievers of the Quraysh and the polytheists of Arabia what was more distasteful than it, example: the message of *tawḥīd* and the rebuttal of idol-worship. Besides, those people were more ruthless, more violent and more given to bloodshed than the Jews and other People of the Book. Hence, God did not use any threatening word when ordering him to convey His message, nor did He find it necessary to give him assurance of His protection.

Apart from that, the verses describing the condition of the People of the Book constitute the major part of the chapter, "The Table." Therefore, this verse was certainly revealed in it; and at the time this chapter was revealed, the Jews' power was already broken, their fire had died down, and they were engulfed by the divine curse and wrath. Whenever they kindled a fire for war, God put it out. In this background, there was no reason for the Messenger of God to fear them regarding the divine religion. They had already entered through peace treaties in the domain of Islam and they, as well as the Christians, had agreed to pay *jizyah*. How could God talk, in this environment, about the Messenger's fear and worry in delivering the divine message to them; while he had conveyed to them messages which were much harder, and stood before them in surroundings which were more frightful and more weird.

Thus, there is no room for any doubt that this verse is totally separate in its context from that of the preceding and following verses; and has no connection with them. In short, it is a single verse, which was revealed alone.

The verse speaks about an order which was sent to the Prophet—the entire religion or some parts of it—and the Prophet was afraid of the people in delivering that message and kept postponing it waiting for a suitable time. If there were no fear and no delaying there was no reason why he should be addressed in such a threatening way: and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message. Compare it with the verses revealed in early period of the Call none of which has any shade of threat. For example: *Read in the name of thy Lord Who created* ... (to the end of ch. 96); *O you who are enwrapped, arise and warn* (74:1–2); *... therefore, follow the right way to Him and ask His forgiveness; and woe to the polytheists* (41:6), apart from other such verses.

No doubt, the Prophet was afraid of the people, but he was not afraid of sacrificing his life in the cause of God, because his whole life and character is a rebuttal of such thinking. Moreover, God Himself testifies about His Messengers that they did not fear the adversaries. For example: There is no harm in the Prophet doing that which God has ordained for him; such has been the course of God with respect to those who have gone before; and the command of God is a decree that is made absolute. *Those who deliver the message of Allah and fear Him, and do not fear any one but Allah; and Allah is sufficient to take account* (33:38–39). Also, God has said concerning such situations: *... so do not fear them, and fear Me if you are believers* (3:175). And He has praised a group of believers that they were not afraid of the people although the people had tried to frighten them: *Those to whom the people said: "Surely men have gathered against you, therefore fear them"; but this (only) increased their faith, and they said: "Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent Protector is (He)." So they returned with favor from Allah and (His) grace; no evil touched them and they followed the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace* (3:173–4).

Also, it is not possible to say that the Prophet was afraid for his life because if he were killed the divine mission was bound to perish, and for this reason he was delaying its conveyance waiting for a suitable time. But this hypothesis is patently false, because God says: *You have no concern in the affair* (3:128); and if they had killed the Prophet, God had power to

revive His mission through any means He pleased and any cause He wished.

Of course, it is possible to infer from the clause: *and Allah will protect you from the people*, that the Prophet was afraid of the people concerning the delivery that they would accuse him (of having selfish motive), which would irreparably damage the whole fabric of conveyance. He had permission from God to use his discretion in such matters, and it had no connection with any fear regarding his own self.

The above description makes it clear that the verse was not revealed in the early days of prophethood, as some exegetes have thought; as in that case there would be no sense in the clause: and Allah will protect you from the people; because such an interpretation would imply that Prophet was delaying the delivery of the divine message because he was afraid that they would kill him and it would cost him his life, or would nullify the effects of *tablīgh*. But such a hypothesis is not tenable.

Again, let us see what is the connotation of the phrase: *what has been revealed to you from your Lord.* Does it mean the whole religion? If so, then the clauses: and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message, would mean: O Messenger! Deliver the religion, and if you do not deliver the religion, then you did not deliver the religion!

Someone has said: The verse means: If you do not deliver the message, then you will be liable to blame for dereliction of duty and negligence of what God had most emphatically commanded you to do and it is in the same vein as the well known Arab poet, Abu al-Najm, has said:

I'm Abu al-Najm, and my poem is poem.

But this explanation is wrong; such rhetorical expressions are used regarding the general and the particular, or the unrestricted and the restricted, and such expressions allude that the both are one and the same; as Abu al-Najm says that my poem is my poem, that is, no one should think that my talent has now dulled, or vicissitudes of time have adversely affected my genius and robbed me of the gift of poetry; because the poem which I compose today has the same brilliance which my poems had in the past.

However, this explanation cannot be applied to the divine speech: and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message. Because if it is believed that the verse was revealed in early days of prophethood, then the message—the religion in its totality or the basic religion—was a single unit, not changeable or alterable. Then how can it be said that if you did

not deliver this message then you did not deliver that message of the basic messages; admittedly in the beginning it was the basic message that was a collection of religious cognition.

It is now clear that the verse could not have been revealed in the early period of prophethood, nor can the phrase: what has been revealed to you from your Lord, point to the basic religion or totality of religion—either in the early days or at any later period; because all such interpretations would render the clause: and if you do it not then you have not delivered His message, devoid of meaning and irrelevant.

We should reiterate here that if message were to refer to the basic or total religion, then the words: O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord, could not have been revealed except in the early days of prophethood, as is clear;

And the problem would remain as before, that the Prophet was afraid of the people in delivering the divine message.

Apparently, the matter which was revealed to the Prophet and this verse put emphasis on its delivery was not the religion in its totality, or basic religion—whatever meaning is understood from it. Therefore, we have to admit that it was a part of religion. The meaning in this case will be as follows: O Messenger! Deliver the particular command revealed to you from your Lord, and if you do it not, then you have not delivered God's message at all. According to this interpretation, "His message" means all the things that the Messenger of God had brought as part of religion. Otherwise, the previous trouble—that the speech would be devoid of meaning—would continue. Let us put it in this way: If "His message" means this particular order, it would mean: 'Deliver this order, and if you did it not, you did not deliver this message!' It is clearly absurd.

The verse therefore means: 'O Messenger! Deliver this particular command, and if you do it not, then you have not delivered the basic message or the message in its totality.' This meaning is correct and understandable and then the speech will be in the style of the poem of Abu al-Najm:

I'm Abu al-Najm, and my poem is poem.

Why was this order so important that if it was not conveyed then the message was not conveyed at all? It was because religion's knowledge and commands are interlinked, intertwined with one another on all sides; if one coil is unravelled, the whole material is destructed—especially in the

sphere of delivery—because each item is connected with all others. This supposition has no defect in itself, yet the clauses coming after it: and God will protect you from the people; surely God will not guide the unbelieving people, do not fit on it. These clauses clearly show that some unbelieving people had decided to oppose this revealed command, or, seeing their tendency, they were expected to oppose it to the extreme. They would use every strategem to nullify this divine mission and neutralize it, so that it could not bring about any effect or benefit. Therefore, God promised His Messenger that He would protect him from them, nullify their artifice and leave them wandering in their own viles.

This meaning does not fit on any revealed order whatsoever; because the religious cognition and orders in Islam are not all of them of the same importance, some are the pillars of religion, others are like the invocation on sighting the crescent, there is prohibition of adultery and that of looking at a stranger woman. The fear that the Prophet had and for which God promised him His protection, cannot be related to every such order; obviously it had emanated from some special commandment.

The fact, that if this commandment was not conveyed, then no other order was conveyed, shows its utmost importance, and makes it crystal clear that this particular order occupies such a central position in the whole structure that if it was left unannounced, it would amount to leaving all other orders unannounced, because its relation to other items is like that of soul with body; if it is disconnected, there would remain only a dead body, devoid of feeling, movement (and perception, etc.).

The verse thus proves that God had sent to his Messenger an order which was to complete the religion, and by which the religion would firmly settle in its proper pedestal. As such there was a danger that the people would oppose it and strive hard to overturn it against the Prophet aiming at demolishing the structure of religion he had built and disintegrating all its parts. The Prophet, having intuitive knowledge of the people's nature, understood their tendency and was afraid that they would contrive to neutralize all his endeavours. Accordingly, he kept postponing its delivery from time to time, waiting for a suitable circumstances and peaceful atmosphere, in order that his mission might be successful and his endeavours fruitful. But God ordered him to make haste in conveying that message, showing to him its importance, and promising to protect him from the people. In

this way, He assured him that He would not let their plans succeed, nor would they be able to overturn his Mission's affairs.

Overturning the Prophetic Mission and negating his efforts after the spread of Islam was not possible for the polytheists and idol-worshippers of Arabia or outside. In other words, it is not possible to suppose that the verse was revealed in Mecca before *hijrah*, and the Prophet was afraid that the people would slander and accuse him of lying in his affairs, as God quotes their calumnies in the Qur'an: *"One taught* (*by others*)*, a madman"* (44:14); *"A poet, we wait for him the evil accidents of time"* (52:30); *"A magician or a mad man"* (51:52); *"You follow only a man deprived of reason"* (17:47); *"This is not but enchantment, narrated"* (74:24); *"The stories of the ancients—he has got them written—so these are read out to him morning and evening"* (25:5); *"Only a mortal teaches him ..."* (16:103); *"Go and steadily adhere to your gods; this is most surely a thing sought after"* (38:6); and other such things which they used to say about him. However, such talks could not shake the foundation of religion. They only show—if they show anything—the confusion and perturbation in their ideas and their crookedness. Moreover, such slanders were not reserved for the Prophet, so that he would be disturbed because of them or afraid of their appearance; in fact all the messengers and prophets were equally made targets of such afflictions and misfortunes; they all had to face such unpalatable situations from their people, as God has described in the stories of Noah and the succeeding prophets who are mentioned in the Qur'an.

If there was something like that—and there must have been—it could be imagined after the *hijrah* when the religion was firmly established in the Islamic society. The Muslims were then a mixed lot: There were good believers, and there were the hypocrites who were powerful and could not be underrated. Lastly there were those whose hearts were diseased whom the Mighty Book calls "the listeners." These people dealt with the Prophet—although they believed in him really or apparently—like the kings are dealt with; and the divine religion in their eyes was not different from man-made national laws. All this may be seen in various sets of Qur'anic verses; and some of them have already been explained in previous volumes of this book.[1]

1 For example, the verses giving the story of Uḥud in ch.3; and verses 105–6

In this background, it could possibly happen that delivery of some orders which could apparently give some advantage to the Prophet, could generate a misconception in those people's minds that he is a king in the guise of prophethood, and his *sharī'ah* is the worldly law disguised as religion; as we find its evidence in some people's talk on various occasions.[1]

If this or similar doubt had entered into their hearts, it would have generated such corruption and perversion in religion which no power on earth could rectify or anyone could remove. Obviously, this revealed order which the Prophet had to deliver was of such a nature that people could think of it to be especially benefitting the Prophet, and that it was particularly reserved to him without any Muslim having any part in it, like the story of Zayd, and plurality of marriages and the one fifth of the war booty, etc.

However, the especial rules, if not affecting general Muslims, were not expected to create doubts in minds. For examples, permission of marriage with a woman divorced by an adopted son was not particularly reserved to him. Likewise, if marrying more than four wives were based on his own desire without permission of God, there was nothing to prevent him from allowing it to all Muslims. His lifelong conduct of giving preference to Muslims over his own self in division of wealth, etc. which came into his hands leaves no room for any doubt in such affairs.

All the above elaboration makes it clear that the verse speaks about a revealed order that could create a misunderstanding that it contains a sort of personal benefit and interest for the Prophet, and gives him a privilege which the others too would have desired; and its delivery and enforcement would deprive them of its enjoyment. That is why the Prophet was afraid of its delivery. But God ordered him to convey it and put utmost emphasis on this delivery, and promised to protect him from the people, telling him that his adversaries will not succeed in their machination, even if they tried.

This supports the traditions, narrated by both sects, that the verse was revealed about the guardianship of ʿAlī; that God had sent direction to convey this commandment, but the Prophet was afraid that the people would accuse him regarding his cousin; that was why he kept postponing

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of ch.4. (Auth.)

1 As Abū Sufyān is reported to speak in the presence of ʿUthmān when he got the caliphate. (Auth.)

its delivery until this verse was sent down; and he delivered it at Ghadīr Khumm, and announced: "He whose *mawlā* (Guardian) am I, this ʿAlī is his *mawlā*."

The essentiality of the Guardianship of the affairs of the *ummah* for religion is clear without any doubt. Islam is a religion so comprehensive and all-encompassing that it has laid down for the whole mankind in all regions and for all times all fundamental gnosis, ethical principles and practical rules which cover all human movement and stillness, separately and collectively, contrary to other general legal systems. How can it be imagined that such a comprehensive system does not need a guardian who should protect and preserve it properly. Or, can it be said that of all the human societies, only the Muslim *ummah* and Islamic society is so self-sufficient that it does not need any ruler to manage its affairs and look after its interests. What excuse can be offered to a research scholar who looks at the social system established by the Prophet and finds that whenever he went out of Medina, he invariably always put a man in his place to manage the society. He had appointed ʿAlī in his place in Medina at the time of going forth to Tabūk; ʿAlī said: "O Messenger of God! Are you leaving me among the women and children?" The Prophet said: "Well, are you not pleased that you should be to me as Aaron was to Moses, except that there is no prophet after me?"

And the Prophet used to appoint governors in all towns, which were in the hands of the Muslims, example: Mecca, Ṭāif and Yemen, etc. Likewise, he appointed people at the head of expeditions and battalions, which he used to send around. And what difference is there between his lifetime and after his death? Rather the essentiality of such appointment is more emphatic for the time after his departure from this world; and the need of such a ruler at that time is more and more pressing.

Qur'an: O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord: The order is addressed to the Messenger, as it is the most appropriate attribute to the conveying the divine order, which was revealed. It is a sort of proof that the delivery mentioned in the verse is obligatory and compulsory; because the only function of a messenger is to convey the message he is entrusted with. In other words, the office of messengership obligates him to deliver the message.

The verse does not elaborate what was revealed to him from his Lord.

It alludes to it just as a thing revealed to him. This vagueness points to the greatness of that message, and shows that the Messenger of God had no hand in it, nor did he have any authority in his own affairs. It would be another proof that he had no power or discretion to keep the order secret and postpone its conveyance from this time to that. It also provided him with an excuse that he had been obligated to deliver this order; and showed that he was perfectly justified in fearing the people in this respect; but at the same time indicated that this important order had to be announced by him, in his own words, through his own tongue.

... and if you do it not, then you have not delivered his message: Some reciters have read, "his messages" in plural. In any case, it means the totality of the messages that was sent by God to His Messenger. We have explained above that this clause shows the utmost importance of the order alluded to; and that it enjoyed such a dignity and position that if it was not conveyed then it would be as if no message was ever delivered by him.

The speech is constructed as a threat; and in reality it connotes the importance of the order—if this one order was not conveyed to the people and its implications were not preserved, it would be as though no other part of religion was ever conveyed.

It is a conditional sentence, to show the importance of the conditional clause; that its subordinate clause depends totally on the principle one for its existence.

This conditional sentence is not like such sentences found in our speech. We use conditional sentences because we do not know whether the principle clause would lake place, bringing about with it the subordinate clause. But far be it from the position of the Prophet that the Qur'an should imply that it was not sure whether the Prophet would convey or not the revealed message. And God says: *Allah best knows where He places His message* (6:124).

In short, this sentence apparently contains a threat, but in fact it makes it known to the Prophet and other people the utmost importance of the order and that the Messenger had no power to delay its delivery.

... and Allah will protect you from the people; surely Allah will not guide the unbelieving people: al-Rāghib has said:

> "*al-'Aṣm* means to take hold; and *al-i'tiṣām* is to adhere. *al-'Iṣām* is strap, that which is used for binding; the prophets enjoy

> *'iṣmah*—that is, God protects them, first through the pure nature which is reserved for them; then through the physical and psychological virtues which He has bestowed upon them. Then through helping them and keeping their feet firm (on righteousness); then by sending tranquillity upon them and protecting their hearts, and finally through *tawfīq* (divine help); God says: "and God will protect you from the people." And *al-'iṣmah* is like bracelet, and *al-mi'ṣam* is wrist, the part of hand where it is worn; the wrist's whiteness is called *'iṣmah*, likening it to bracelet, as the whiteness of foot is called *taḥjīl* (wearing anklet); in the same vein they say, *a'ṣam* (white-footed) crow (that is, rare)."

Comment: The explanation given above of the prophets' *'iṣmah* is good, there is no objection to it; but those meanings cannot be applied to the verse under discussion: *and Allah will protect you from the people*; if we were to apply it, it may be applied to the verse: ... *and they shall not harm you in any way, and Allah has revealed to you the Book and the Wisdom, and He has taught you what you did not know, and Allah's grace on you is very great* (4:113). As for the clause: *and Allah will protect you from the people*, the verb, *ya'ṣim*, in it apparently denotes protection and safety from the people's evil which they aimed at the noble person of the Prophet, or his religious objectives or at the success of his Call and the triumph of his endeavours—in short, any connotation appropriate to his sacred office.

However, looking at the usage of this word, we find that it actually means holding fast and clutching. Therefore, its use in the meaning of protection is based on allusion because protection necessitates holding it fast.

Protection from the people is unrestricted and general. It does not say from which type of machination of the people the Prophet shall be protected. Does it point to their transgression and endeavours to harm him in body, like murder, poisoning, or assassination? Or through speech, like abusing and slandering? Or through some other devices, like disrupting his affairs one way or another through treachery, deception and double-dealing? In short this non-identification of things protected against, implies a sort of generalization; yet the context confines it to their evil that could have disrupted and destroyed what he had built and raised of the structure of religion.

"The people" refers to all human beings, without looking at any

speciality, be it natural and in field of creation, like masculinity and femininity, or otherwise, like knowledge, virtues, and richness, etc. That is why it is seldom used for other than a group; and for this very reason, it often points to virtuous human beings if the virtue spoken of has some relation with humanity, as God says: And when it is said to them: "Believe as the people have believed" (2:13), that is, those in whom meaning of humanity is found, and it is by which truth is perceived and distinguished from falsity.

Also, sometimes it denotes a sort of vileness and downfall in circumstances. This happens when the subject of talk is a thing in which some such human virtues are contemplated which are extraneous to the basic theme of the species, as God says: ... *but most people do not know* (30:30). Or, as you may say: Don't put trust in the people's promises; or, don't seek help from their masses. In the above clauses, you want to express the idea that trust or appeal to help should be placed in virtuous people who have natural disposition to fulfil their undertakings and to remain firm on their stand; that you should not trust such people who are merely called humans, without any praise or blame being attached to them; (especially) when the main theme does not indicate any merit or demerit other than the basic meaning of humanity, as God says: *O you people! Surely We have created you of a male and a female and made you nations and tribes that you may recognize each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one who is most pious;* ... (49:13).

Probably, the word: "the people", in the clause: "and God will protect you from the people", points to the multitude of people which encompasses believers and hypocrites and those whose hearts are diseased; all of them are mixed together without any distinction. Therefore, if there is a cause to fear them, all of them combined will be feared.

Probably the clause: "surely God will not guide the unbelieving people," points to it. This clause explains the reason of the preceding one: "and God will protect you from the people"; it has been described earlier that the verse was revealed after *hijrah* when the Islam had gained upper hand in Arabia, and most of the people had apparently entered into the fold of Islam, although there were among them the hypocrites and those whose hearts were diseased. Therefore, the phrase: "unbelieving people" denotes those who were mingled with the general public, who were not called "unbelievers" yet the characteristics of disbelief had taken root in

their hearts. And through this clause, God has given assurance that He will nullify their machinations and protect His Messenger from their evil.

Also, it seems clear that in this clause, disbelief means disbelieving in one of the commandments of God, that is, the order to which the phrase: *what has been revealed to you from your Lord* points to, is the same style that has been used in the verse of Ḥājj: ... *and whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient* (*independent*) *of the worlds* (3:97).

In any case, the context of the verse does not allow taking "disbelief" in the meaning of rejection of the two testimonies. Such views can only be considered if we take: what has been revealed to you from your Lord, as referring to the sum total of all the revealed messages, but you have seen that this interpretation has no leg to stand upon.

The statement that God will not guide the disbelievers, means that He will not guide them in their treachery and machinations, and will prevent usual causes to submit to them when they proceed to their objectives of evil and mischief. It is like the verses: ... *surely Allah does not guide the transgressing people* (63:6); ... *and Allah does not guide aright the unjust people* (2:258). Detailed discussion on this subject may be seen in volume two.[1]

It is certainly not correct to say that the non-guidance here means not guiding them to correct faith, because it goes against the basic concept of Divine Call. How can God tell His Messenger: You call them to God, or, invite them to obey the divine command, but I will not guide them to it, except for the purpose of completing the proof against them!

Moreover, we see with our own eyes that God guides a lot of unbelievers to faith, and continues to do so every day; and He Himself has said: ... *and Allah guides whom He pleases to the straight path* (2:213).

Now, it is crystal clear that not guiding the unbelievers means that God does not let them achieve their goal of negating the word of truth and extinguishing the light of the revealed commandments. The unbelievers as well as the unjust people and the transgressors, under the influence of their sinister minds and erroneous views, want to change the custom of God, which encompasses the whole creation. They intend to divert the proceedings of true causes (which are free from stigma of disobeying the Lord of the universe) towards their own false goals and wicked destinations. But

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng), vol.4. (Trans.)

their formal powers can never debilitate Almighty Lord. Let them ponder on this question. Who has put these powers in their body? The only answer is: God. (How can these powers overpower their Creator?)

They might occasionally succeed in their endeavours and obtain for a short time what they want, but soon all this is turned upside down and their trickery turns against themselves *and the evil plan does not beset any save the authors of it ...* (35:43); *thus does Allah compare truth and falsehood; then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people, it remains in the earth; thus does Allah set forth parables* (13:17).

Accordingly, the clause: "surely God will not guide the unbelieving people", elaborates the preceding one: "and God will protect you from the people", putting some limitation on its generality. The protection then means that God will protect him so that the people do not inflict any harm on him before he achieves his objectives of delivering this order and announcing it to the *ummah*. For example, He will not let them kill him before he conveys the message; they would not be able to rise against him or overturn his affairs, or accuse him of such matters which would make the believers go out of his religion, or affect such devices which would destroy and annihilate this *sharī'ah*. Nay, God will certainly make the word of truth victorious, and establish the religion as He pleases, wherever He pleases and whenever He pleases. God says: *If He pleases, He can make you pass away, O people! And bring others; and Allah has the power to do this* (4:133).

However, the sentence: "and God will protect you from the people", cannot be taken to imply a general and all-encompassing protection from all and every trouble and harm; because such a view is rebutted by the Qur'an, the *ḥadīth* and accepted history. The Prophet had to suffer from his people—be they believers, unbelievers or hypocrites—such misfortunes, tribulations and multifarious afflictions and grievances which nobody could ever bear—except the noble Prophet; and he has said—in a famous *ḥadīth*: "No prophet was ever harmed like I have been."

Examining Narrations

(1) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from Ibn ʿAbbās and Jābir b. ʿAbdillāh, that they said, "God, the High, ordered His Prophet Muḥammad, to set up ʿAlī (as a) standard among the people,

in order to inform them of his *wilāyah* (guardianship); so the Messenger of God, was afraid lest they say, 'He has brought his cousin to us,' and speak against him in this matter. Then God revealed to him the verse: *O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message; and Allah will protect you from the people*. So, the Messenger of God, raised up his *wilāyah* on the day of Ghadīr Khumm." (*al-Tafsīr*)

(2) Also, he narrates from Ḥanān b. Sadīr, from his father, from Abū Ja'far that he said, "When Jibrīl brought, in the days of the Messenger of God, in the Last Pilgrimage, (the order of) announcement of the matter of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib: O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord (to the end of the verse); so the Prophet delayed (it) for three days until he reached Juḥfah, yet he did not take ʿAlī's hand for fear of the people. Then when he came down at Juḥfah on the day of Ghadīr at a place called Mahya'ah, he (ordered to announce): The congregational prayer. The people gathered together. The Prophet, then said, 'Who has more authority on you than you have yourselves?' They loudly said, 'God and His Messenger.' Then he asked them the second time and they said, 'God and His Messenger.' Then he again asked the third time and they said, 'God and His Messenger.'

"Then he caught the hand of ʿAlī and said, 'Whoever whose Master I am, ʿAlī is his Master; O God! Love him who loves ʿAlī, and be the enemy of the enemy of ʿAlī; help him who helps ʿAlī, and forsake him who forsakes ʿAlī; for indeed he is from me and I am from him; and he has the same position in relation to me as Aaron had to Moses except that there is no prophet after me.'" (*ibid.*)

(3) Also he narrates from Abu al-Jārūd, from Abū Ja'far that he said, "When God revealed to His Prophet: O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message; *and Allah will protect you from the people; surely Allah will not guide the unbelieving people*, (The Imam said), 'Then the Messenger of God caught the hand of ʿAlī and said, "O people! Surely there was not any prophet,

among the prophets who were before me, but he lived his life then (God) called him (back) and he accepted (the call); and the time is near that I'll be called and I'll accept it; and I shall be asked and you shall be asked; so what are you going to say?" They said, "We shall bear witness that you had certainly delivered (the message) and acted in good faith and fulfilled what was incumbent upon you, so may God recompense you the best of the recompense He had given to the Messengers." (The Prophet) said, "O God! Be witness (of it)."

Then he said, "O group of the Muslims! He who is present should convey it to those who are absent. Whoever believes in me and gives credence to my truth, I enjoin on him the *wilāyah* of ʿAlī. Well certainly ʿAlī's *wilāyah* is my *wilāyah*, being a covenant which my Lord made with me; and He has ordered me to convey it to you." Then he said, "Did you hear?"—saying it three times—so someone said, "Indeed we have heard, O Messenger of God!" (*ibid.*)

(4) (al-Ṣaffār) narrates through his chain from al-Fuḍayl b. Yasār, from Abū Jaʾfar that he said about the words of God: O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message, that "It is *wilāyah*." (*Baṣāir al-darajāt*)

Author's comment: al-Kulaynī has narrated about the revelation of this verse in relation to *wilāyah* with the story of Ghadīr in *al-Kāfī*, through his chain, from Abu al-Jārūd, from Abū Jaʾfar in a lengthy *ḥadīth*. Also, this meaning has been narrated by al-Ṣadūq, in *Maʾāni al-akhbār*, through his chain, from Muḥammad b. al-Fayḍ b. al-Mukhtār, from his father, from Abū Jaʾfar in a lengthy *ḥadīth*. Also, al-ʿAyyāshī has narrated from Abu al-Jārūd in a lengthy narration; and from ʿAmr b. Yazīd from Abū ʿAbdillāh in abbreviated form.

(5) al-Thaʾlabī writes in his *al-Tafsīr*: "Jaʾfar b. Muḥammad said explaining the word of God: O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord, (that it was revealed) about the excellence of ʿAlī; so when it was revealed, the Prophet caught the hand of ʿAlī and said, 'Whoever whose Master am I, ʿAlī is his Master.'"

(6) The same writer narrates through his chain from al-Kalbī, from Abū Ṣāliḥ, from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said about this verse, "It was revealed about ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib; God ordered the Prophet that he should convey (the order) about him; so he caught the hand of ʿAlī and said, 'Whoever whose Master am I, ʿAlī is his Master; O God! Love him who loves ʿAlī, and be enemy of the enemy of ʿAlī.'"

(7) (al-Baḥrānī) narrates from Abraham al-Thaqafī through his chain, from al-Khudrī and Buraydah al-Aslamī and Muḥammad b. ʿAlī that it was revealed on the day of Ghadīr about ʿAlī. (*al-Tafsīr*)

(8) al-Tha'labī writes about its meaning that Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. ʿAlī said, "It means, deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord about ʿAlī."

(9) *Tafsīr al-Manār* quotes the following from *al-Tafsīr* of al-Tha'labī: "Verily this word of the Prophet, regarding the love of ʿAlī spread about and reached all towns; it was conveyed to al-Ḥārith b. al-Nu'mān al-Fihrī; so he came to the Prophet, on his camel, and (the Prophet) was in al-Abṭaḥ; he came down and tied his camel, and said to the Prophet—and he was in a gathering of his companions: 'O Muḥammad! You ordered us on behalf of God that we should bear witness that there is no god except God and that you are the Messenger of God; and we accepted (it) from you.' (Then he likewise mentioned all the pillars of Islam.) 'Yet you were not pleased with all this until you caught the upper arm of your cousin and gave him preference over us saying: "Whoever whose Master am I, ʿAlī is his Master;" so is this from you or from God?' He said, 'By God, except Whom there is no god! It is the order of God.' Thereupon al-Ḥārith turned back towards his riding camel, and he was saying: 'O God! If this is the truth from Thee, then rain upon us stones from heaven or inflict on us a painful punishment.' So he had not yet reached his camel when God struck him with a stone, it fell on his head and came out from his rear; and God revealed: *One demanding (person) demanded the chastisement which must befall the unbelievers—there is none to avert it* (70:1–2)."

Author's comment: The author of *al-Manār* after quoting this *ḥadīth* has commented as follows:

"This tradition is forged; and this sūrah of al-Ma'ārij (ch.70) is

> of Meccan period; and the saying of some unbelievers of the Quraysh ("O God! If this is the truth from Thee, ...") which God has quoted (in 8:32) was a reminder of what they had said before *hijrah*. That reminder is in the sūrah of al-Anfāl (ch.8) which was revealed after the battle of Badr, years before the revelation of 'The Table'; while this tradition apparently shows that al-Ḥārith b. al-Nu'mān was a Muslim and then he apostatized, but he is not known as a companion. al-Abṭaḥ is in Mecca, and the Prophet did not return from Ghadīr Khumm to Mecca, as he had come down at Ghadīr when he was returning to Medina after the Last Pilgrimage."

You may clearly see how arbitrarily he has pontificated. Let us look at it, sentence by sentence:

> *al-Manār*: "This tradition is forged; and this chapter of al-Ma'ārij is of Meccan period."

Comment: This claim relies on some traditions narrated from Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn al-Zubayr that the chapter of al-Ma'ārij was revealed at Mecca. Would that I knew why those traditions should be given preference over this tradition, because both of them are *khabar al-wāḥid* (solitary tradition).

Let us accept that this chapter is of Meccan period, as the theme of most of its verses support it. Yet what is the proof that all its verses were revealed at Mecca? May be the chapter was Meccan but these two verses were non-Meccan. For example, this chapter "The Table" is of Medina period which was revealed during the last days of the Messenger of God (may God bless him and his progeny!), and in this Medinan chapter, the verse under discussion (O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord ...) has been placed, which, many exegetes insist, was revealed at Mecca in the early days of the Mission. Thus, if a Meccan verse (O Messenger! Deliver ...) can be placed in a Medinan chapter, "The Table", why cannot a Medinan verse (One demanding (person) demanded ...) be put in a Meccan chapter, al-Ma'ārij?

> *al-Manār*: And the saying of some unbelievers of the Quraysh ...:

Comment: It is not less than the preceding sentence in arbitrariness. Even if we accept that the chapter of al-Anfāl was revealed several years before the chapter of "The Table" is there any reason to say that at the

time of compilation some later revealed verses could not be placed in it. For example, the verses of usury and the verse: *And fear the day in which you shall be returned to Allah*; ... (2:281), (which according to them were the last verses revealed to the Prophet), were placed in the chapter of "The Cow" (which was revealed in the early days of *hijrah* several years before those verses).

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al-Manār: The quotation of the saying of some unbelievers of the Quraysh (O God! If this is the truth from Thee, ...) was a reminder of what they had said before *hijrah*:

Comment: It is another arbitrary statement for which there is no proof at all—if we do not say that the context proves the opposite. Those who understand the style of literature cannot entertain any doubt that the words: *O Allah! If this is the truth from Thee, then rain upon us stones from heaven or inflict on us a painful punishment*, were not uttered by an idolater polytheist. This verse contains a demonstrative pronoun strengthened with a detached pronoun, then the word "the truth" which has been turned into a proper noun by addition of al (the), and the clause: from Thee, all these factors show that, far from being the talk of an idolator who mocks the truth and takes it as a joke, it is the speech of the one who believes in God's Lordship and knows that the truthful affairs are decided by Him, and the laws are sent by Him. But he is not sure about a matter, which is attributed to God, and a claimant says that it is the Truth—to the exclusion of all other things—nevertheless he finds himself unable to accept it. At this stage he curses himself invoking God's wrath on himself, as is done by someone who is wearied and tired of life.

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al-Manār: This tradition apparently shows that al-Ḥārith b. al-Nu'mān was a Muslim and then he apostatized; but he is not known as a companion:

Comment: Again the same arbitrary attitude! Can anyone claim that the Muslims had recorded the names of all those who had seen the Prophet and believed in him? Or of those who believed and then went out of Islam? And if they need any proof, then this tradition may be treated as the proof of this man's companionship.

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al-Manār: al-Abṭaḥ is in Mecca, and the Prophet did not return from Ghadīr Khumm to Mecca.

Comment: It shows that he has taken the word, al-Abṭaḥ, as the name

of a particular place in Mecca, instead of taking it in its general (or literal) meaning, as the word is used for any sandy place. But there is no proof to support his interpretation; rather the proof goes against it—and it is the narrative given in this tradition and other places.

There is a verse:

I was saved and al-Murādī (*Ibn Muljam*) *had made his sword wet,*
from (*the blood of*) *the son of Abū Ṭālib, the Chief of al-Abāṭiḥ.*

It may be inferred from it that Mecca and its adjacent areas were called al-Abāṭiḥ.[1]

Apart from that, this very tradition has been narrated by other than al-Tha'labī, and there is no mention of al-Abṭaḥ in it—this tradition is coming below from *Majma' al-bayān* through the Sunnī chains and other books.

However, the tradition is a solitary one; it is neither *mutawātir* nor is it verified and confirmed by definite associations; and you have known from our previous discourses that we do not rely on solitary traditions in other than the rules of practical fiqh. It is in accordance with the general system of the intelligent persons on which man has based his life. Anyhow, the following discussion merely aims at showing the untenability of the proofs he has offered for the putative forgery of this tradition.

(10) al-Ṭabrisī writes: Informed us al-Sayyid Abu al-Ḥamd; he said: narrated to us al-Ḥākim Abu al-Qāsim al-Ḥaskānī; he said: informed us Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Shīrāzī; he said: informed us Abū Bakr al-Jurjānī; he said: informed us Abū Aḥmad al-Baṣrī; he said: narrated to us Muḥammad b. Sahl; he said: narrated to us Zayd b. Ishmael *Mawlā* of al-Anṣār; he said: narrated to us Muḥammad b. Ayyūb al-Wāsiṭī; he said: narrated to us Sufyān b. ʿUyaynah, from Ja'far b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq, from his fathers, that he said, "When the Messenger of God, installed ʿAlī on the day of Ghadīr

1 It is written in *Marāṣid al-iṭṭilā'*: "*Abṭaḥ* = every riverbed containing smaller pebbles is called *abṭaḥ*. Ibn Durayd has said, *al-Abṭaḥ* and *al-Baṭḥā* means soft ground spread out.' Abū Zayd has said, *al-Abṭaḥ* = sign of a riverbed, be it narrow or wide. *al-Abṭaḥ* is correlated to Mecca as well as to Minā because it is equidistant from both, and possibly it is nearer to Minā and it is al-Muḥaṣṣab, and it is Khīf Banī Kinānah; and it has also been said that it is Dhū Ṭuwā, but it is separate from it.'" (Auth.)

Khumm (and) said, 'Whoever whose Master am I, this 'Alī is his Master,' and it reached (various) towns, so al-Nu'mān b. al-Ḥārith al-Fihrī came to the Prophet and said, 'You ordered us from God that we should bear witness that there is no god except God and that you are the Messenger of God; and you ordered us to fight (in the way of God) and to perform *ḥajj*, and to fast, and to pray, and to pay *zakāt*; so we accepted it (all); yet you were not pleased until you have installed this youth, and you said, "Whoever whose Master am I, 'Alī is his Master."Now, is this thing from you or is it an order from God, the High?' So (the Prophet) said, 'Certainly, by God other than Whom there is no god! Indeed it is from God.' "Then al-Nu'mān b. al-Ḥārith turned away, and he was saying: '*O Allah! If this is the truth from Thee, then rain upon us stones from heaven* (...).' So God struck a stone on his head and killed him. Then God revealed: One demanding (person) demanded the chastisement which must befall. (*Majma' al-bayān*)

Author's comment: This theme is also narrated in *al-Kafī*.

(11) al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Nu'aym narrates a *ḥadīth* which he has ascribed to 'Alī b. 'Āmir, from Abu al-Ḥajjāf, from al-A'mash, from 'Aṭiyyah that he said, "This verse was revealed to the Messenger of God (may God bless him and his progeny and send peace on them), about 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib: O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and God has said: This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you and chosen for you Islam as religion." (*Nuzūl al-Qur'an*)

(12) al-Mālikī has said, "al-Imam Abu al-Ḥasan al-Wāḥidī has narrated in his book, *Asbāb al-nuzūl*, ascribing it through his chain to Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (may God be pleased with him), that he said, 'This verse: O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord, was revealed on the day of Ghadīr Khumm about 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.'" (*al-Fuṣūl al-muhimmah*)

Author's comment: And it has been narrated in Fatḥ al-Qadīr, from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Marduwayh and Ibn 'Asākir, from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī; and likewise in *al-Durr al-manthūr*.

(13) al-Shaykh Muḥyi al-Dīn al-Nawawī has explained the word Khumm as follows: "It is the name of a field, three miles from

al-Juḥfah; in it is a well known *Ghadīr* (pond) which is ascribed to this field."

(14) Ibn Marduwayh has narrated from Ibn Mas'ūd that he said, "We used to recite during the time of the Messenger of God: O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord that ʿAlī is the Master of the believers, and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message; *and Allah will protect you from the people*." (*Fatḥ al-qadīr*)

Author's comment: This is a small portion of the traditions, which show that, the verse: *O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord ...*, was revealed about ʿAlī on the day of Ghadīr Khumm. As for the *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr, (that is, the Prophet's declaration: 'Whoever whose Master am I, ʿAlī is his Master'), it is a *mutawātir ḥadīth* which has been narrated in Shī'ah and Sunnī sources through more than a hundred chains.

It has been narrated from a great multitude of the companions, among them being al-Barā' b. ʿĀzib, Zayd b. Arqam, Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, Salmān al-Fārisī, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, ʿAmmār b. Yāsir, Buraydah, Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAbbās, Abū Hurayrah, Jābir b. ʿAbdillāh, Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, Anas b. Mālik, ʿImrān b. al-Ḥuṣayn, Ibn Abī Awfā, Su'dānah and the wife of Zayd b. Arqam.

The Imams of Ahl al-bayt are all agreed on it; and ʿAlī had adjured the people by God at the public square (of Kūfah) about this *ḥadīth*, and a group of the companions who were present there stood up and testified that they had heard the Messenger of God saying it on the day of Ghadīr.

Many of these traditions show that the Messenger of God said in his speech, inter alia: "O people! Don't you know that certainly I have more authority over the believers than they have themselves?" They said, "Certainly." He said, "Whoever whose Master am I, ʿAlī is his Master." These wordings are seen in many traditions narrated by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in his Musnad, and by others. The Sunnīs and the Shī'ahs both have compiled many books especially to enumerate the chains of the tradition and to discuss and comment on its text; and they have done full justice to it which has not left any room for further elaboration.[1]

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1 For a concise yet comprehensive review of the *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr, see the translator's book, Imamate, published by WOFIS, 1985/1405, pp.62–81. (Ed.)

(15) al-Ḥamawaynī narrates through his chain from Abū Hurayrah that he said, "The Messenger of God, said, 'The night when I was taken to the seventh heaven, I heard a voice from under the Throne: Verily ʿAlī is the sign of guidance and beloved of him who believes in Me; convey (it) to ʿAlī.' When the Prophet descended from the heaven, he was made to forget it. Then God, the Mighty, the Great, revealed (to him): *O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message; and Allah will protect you from the people; surely Allah will not guide the unbelieving people*.'" (*Farāid al-simṭayn*)

(16) Ibn Abī Ḥātim has narrated from Jābir b. ʿAbdillāh that he said, "When the Messenger of God, fought Banū Anmār, he came down at Dhāt al-Raqī' in the higher part of the date orchard. So while he was sitting on the top of a well, dangling his feet (in it), al-Wārith of Banu al-Najjār, said, 'Indeed I'll certainly kill Muḥammad.' His companions said, 'How will you kill him?' He said, 'I'll tell him: "Give me your sword," and when he will give me it, I'll kill him with it.' So he came to him and said, 'O Muḥammad! Give me your sword, so that I may smell it.' So he gave it to him. But his hand trembled until the sword fell down from his hand. The Messenger of God said, 'God intervened between you and what you had intended.' Then God revealed: O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord ..." (*Fatḥ al-qadīr*).

Author's comment: After the above, al-Shawkānī has written in *Fatḥ al-qadīr*: "Ibn Ḥibbān has narrated it in his al-Ṣaḥīḥ. Also Ibn Marduwayh has narrated from Abū Hurayrah nearly the same story without giving the man's name; and Ibn Jarīr has narrated likewise from Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Qaraẓī; and the story of Ghawrath b. al-Ḥārith is written in al-Ṣaḥīḥ, and it is famous and well known." However, the problem here is to fit the story on the theme of this verse—and it will never fit on it.

(17) It is narrated in *al-Durr al-manthūr* and *Fatḥ al-qadīr*, etc. from Ibn Marduwayh and al-Ḍiyā' in al-Mukhtārah, from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said, "Verily the Messenger of God, was asked, 'Which of the verses sent down from the heaven was the hardest for you?' He said, 'I was in Minā during the *ḥajj* period; and gathered there—in

those days—the polytheists of Arabia and other people. Then Jibrīl brought to me and said: O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you ...' (The Prophet) said, 'Then I stood near the mountain pass and called out, "O people! Who will help me in delivering the message of my Lord, and he shall enter the Garden? O people! Say: 'There is no god except God and I am God's Messenger to you', (and) you will be successful and will prosper, and you shall get the Garden.'"

"(The Prophet) said, 'Then there was not any man, woman or child, but they were hurling earth and stone (at me) and spitting on my face and saying, "The Liar, the Ṣābian." Then someone appeared before me and said, "O Muḥammad! If you are the Messenger, then the time has come for you to curse them, as Noah had invoked against his people to annihilate them." But the Prophet said, "O God! Guide my people, because they do not know."'

"Then his uncle, 'Abbās, came and rescued him from them and removed them from him."

Author's comment: The complete verse does not fit on this story, as you have known its details. However, if it is taken to mean that only a part of the verse (O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord) was revealed on that occasion, it could be tenable. But the tradition apparently rejects this view. And the same is the position of the following traditions:

(18) It is written in *al-Durr al-manthūr* and *Fatḥ al-qadīr*. 'Abd b. Ḥamīd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Abu al-Shaykh have narrated from Mujāhid that he said, "When the verse: Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord, was revealed, (the Prophet) said, 'O my Lord! I'm but one, how should I do it? The people will combine together again me.' Then it was revealed: and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message."

(19) The same two books narrate from al-Ḥasan, "The Messenger of God, said, 'Verily God sent me with His message, and I felt uneasy about it, and I knew that the people would accuse me of lying. Then (God) promised me that I must deliver (it) or He would punish me; so He revealed: O Messenger! Deliver what has been

revealed to you from your Lord.'"

Author's comment: These two traditions, in addition to being maqṭū' and mursal, have the same defect as the preceding one—that they do not fit the theme of the verse. Similar is the condition of some traditions saying that the Messenger of God used to keep guards for himself; but when this verse was revealed he let them disperse and said, "Verily my Lord has promised to protect me."

(20) *Tafsīr al-Manār* says: It has been narrated by those exegetes who base their exegesis on tradition, as well as by al-Tirmidhī, Abu al-Shaykh, al-Ḥākim, Abū Nu'aym, al-Bayhaqī and al-Ṭabarānī from several companions that the Prophet used to keep guards in Mecca before revelation of this verse; when it was revealed, he discarded them; and Abū Ṭālib was the first person to manage his guarding; and ʿAbbās too used to guard him.

Also, it is written therein: Among the traditions on this subject, it is narrated from Jābir and Ibn ʿAbbās that the Prophet used to keep guards, and his uncle, Abū Ṭālib, used to send with him everyday some men from Banū Hāshim (for protection), until this verse was revealed; then he said, "O Uncle! Verily God has given me protection. (Now), I have no need of anyone to be sent (with me)."

Author's comment: These two traditions, as you see, show that the verse was revealed in the middle of the Prophet's stay at Mecca. They imply that he conveyed for sometime his message, but then he felt unable to bear the people's offensives and their denials of his veracity, until he feared that they would kill him. So he abandoned the delivery of the Message and the Divine Call. Then he was ordered again to engage in the Call, and God threatened him if he neglected it, and also promised to protect him, then he began the noble work the second time. But the Prophet's dignity and sanctity totally rejects such an idea.

(21) Also, *al-Durr al-manthūr* and *Fatḥ al-qadīr* have reported: ʿAbdb. Ḥamīd, al-Tirmidhī, Abu al-Shaykh, al-Ḥākim and Ibn Marduwayh as well as Abū Nu'aym and al-Bayhaqī (both in *al-Dalāil*) have narrated from ʿĀishah that she said, "The Messenger of God used to keep guards until the verse: *and Allah will protect you from the people*, was revealed. So he stuck his head

out of the cupola and said, 'O people! Go away (now) because God has (promised to) protect me.'"

Author's comment: As you see, the tradition apparently shows that the verse was revealed at Medina.

(22) al-Ṭabarī narrates in his *al-Tafsīr* from Ibn 'Abbās in explanation of: and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message, that it means: "If you hide a verse out of what has been revealed to you, then you have not delivered His message."

Author's comment: If this refers to a particular verse—a particular order—that was revealed to the Prophet, then it may be treated as correct. But if it means a threat concerning any unspecified verse or order, then you have seen earlier that the verse does not fit such interpretation.

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Verses 68–86

The verses in themselves are inter-linked and appear to be in the same context. But they are not connected with the verse: *And if they had kept up the Torah and the Gospel* (5:66) even if we do not look at the verse: *O Messenger! Deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord;* (5:67). As for the connection of the verse 5:67, you have known its details.

It is more likely that these verses run on the same track which is used by the preceding verses from the beginning of the chapter up to this point. Look at the theme of the verse 5:12 (*And certainly Allah made a covenant with the Children of Israel ...*) up to the end of the verses under discussion, and you will see that, except for a few intervening verses like those of *wilāyah* and *tablīgh*, etc.; all deal with the affairs of the People of the Book; and the same is the topic of the following verses up to the end of the chapter.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَسْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ تُقِيمُوا التَّوْرَاةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۗ وَلَيَزِيدَنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا ۖ فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

(5:68) Say: "O People of the Book! You have no ground to stand upon until you keep up the Torah and the Gospel and that which is revealed to you from your Lord"; and surely that which has been revealed to you from your Lord shall make many of them increase in inordinacy and unbelief; grieve not therefore for the unbelieving people.

It is a common experience of human beings that when they want to perform a laborious and hard work that requires the use of utmost strength, they let their bodies or organs rely on some firmly fixed things. For example, if a man wants to pull a heavy thing, or to push, or remove it, or to carry it or make it stand, he firmly puts his feet on earth and then begins the work he has to do. He knows that if his feet are not firmly held by some strong surface, he will not be able to do his work.

If we apply the same principle in immaterial affairs, e.g., man's spiritual

activities, or psychological affairs, it would indicate that performance of great activities and prodigious deeds depends on a spiritual base, strong psychological foundation; that is, such actions depend on patience, firmness, high ambition and strong willpower. Likewise, man can succeed in his dealings with God only through true piety and desistence from forbidden things.

All this shows that the clause: "you have no ground to stand upon" (lit. you are not on anything), alludes to the fact that they do not rely on a thing which would keep their feet firmly in place in order that they could keep up the Torah and the Gospel, and what has been revealed to them from their Lord. It signals that God's religion and His commands are a heavy burden which man cannot easily pick up or bear on his shoulders without depending on a firm foundation and surface; he cannot keep the religion up merely by his desire. God has pointed to this heavy burden in relation to the noble Qur'an: *Surely We will send down to you a weighty word.* (73:5); *Had We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, you would certainly have seen it falling down, splitting asunder because of the fear of Allah, and We set forth these parables to men that they may reflect* (59:21); *Surely We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, and were afraid thereof; and man undertook it, verily he was unjust ignorant* (33:72).

And He says in relation to the Torah, addressing Moses: ... *so take hold of it with firmness and enjoin your people to take hold of what is best thereof*; (7:145). And He says addressing the Children of Israel: *Take hold of what We have given you with firmness* (2:63). And He says addressing John: *O John! Take hold of the Book with strength* (19:12).

The verse in short says that you do not have anything to rely upon in your desire to keep up the religion of God, which He has revealed to you in His Books. You could get that support if you practise piety, return to Him repeatedly through repentance time and again, hold fast to His cord, and rely on His pillar. But your attitude is contrary to it; you haughtily turn away from His worship and transgress His limits.

The same meaning appears from the verse: *He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon Noah, and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus* ... (42:13). It makes it clear that the sum total of religion is what is mentioned

in these words. Then it is followed by the admonition: *that keep up the religion and be not divided therein* (42:13). It puts emphasis on unity and warns them of division and disunity. Then the verse says: *hard to the polytheists is that which you call them to*. It is because they do not like to see you united; it is hard for them to see you firm in obedience to religious commands. Then God further says: *Allah chooses for Himself whom He pleases, and guides to Himself him who turns (to Him) frequently*. It declares that keeping up the religion is not feasible without guidance from God. Only such a person is capable of doing it who repents to God, holds to His cord fast without breaking it, and returns to Him again and again. Then God says: *And they did not become divided until after the knowledge had come to them, out of rivalry among themselves* (42:14). It shows that the only reason of their division and disunity and of their not keeping up to religion is their rivalry and envy and their transgressing the via media laid down for them.

God likewise mentions this factor in similar verses: *Then set your face upright for religion in natural devotion* (*to truth*)*, the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion, but most people do not know—turning to Him, and be careful of* (*your duty to*) *Him, and keep up prayer and be not of the polytheists, of those who divided their religion and became sects; every party rejoicing in what they had with them* (30:30–32). This too clearly says that the means of keeping up the natural religion is to return to God and keeping the cord intact which attaches him to the divine presence, and not letting that cord be cut or severed at all.

He had pointed to this reality in the verses preceding these verses under discussion, where He had mentioned that God had cursed the Jews and was displeased with them because of their transgressing His limits; consequently He put enmity and hatred among them. Also, He has mentioned this theme particularly about the Christians in another context as He said in this verse: ... *therefore We excited among them enmity and hatred to the Day of Resurrection* ... (5:14).

God had warned the Muslims of similar painful affliction that was to fall down on the People of the Book—the Jews and the Christians. He informed them that they shall never be able to keep up the Torah and the Gospel and what was revealed to them from their Lord. History testifies that what the Qur'an had foretold, has actually taken place. They are

divided into untold denominations and their mutual enmity and hatred goes on unabated. So, God warned the Muslim *ummah* lest they follow in their track and their relation with God be severed and they do not return to God, as He said in the verse: *Then set your face upright for religion in natural devotion* ... (30:30), among many other verses in the same chapter 30.

We have elaborated on various verses of this theme in previous volumes of this book, and, God willing, some other verses will be explained in coming volumes.

As for the divine word: "and surely that which has been revealed to you from your Lord shall make many of them increase in inordinacy and disbelief;" its explanation has already been given before. The clause: "grieve not therefore for the unbelieving people", aims at giving consolation to the Prophet in the form of prohibition.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئُونَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

(5:69) Surely those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabaeans and the Christians whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good—they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.

Apparently, the word *al-ṣābiūn* in nominative case, is in conjunction with "those who believe."

A group of grammarians says that the subject of *inna* (Surely) (in this instance: those who believe) cannot be placed in conjunction with another word of nominative case before its predicate is mentioned. But this verse disproves their view.

The verse aims at explaining that so far as the ultimate happiness is concerned, nomenclatures and titles have no effect on it. A group is called believers, another is named Jews, a third is labelled Sabaeans, and a fourth is branded Christians. But none of the titles will be of any benefit before God; the only quality needed is the belief in God, the Last Day, and good deeds.

In the first volume of this book, detailed discussion of this topic has been given under the verse 62 of chapter 2.[1]

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1 See *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol.1. (Trans.)

لَقَدْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ رُسُلًا ۖ كُلَّمَا جَاءَهُمْ
رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَىٰ أَنْفُسُهُمْ فَرِيقًا كَذَّبُوا وَفَرِيقًا يَقْتُلُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

(5:70) Certainly We made a covenant with the Children of Israel and We sent to them messengers; whenever there came to them a messenger with what their souls did not desire, some (of them) did they call liars and some they used to slay.

This and the following verses describe the condition of the People of the Book, as a proof of what has been said in the preceding verse: *O People of the Book! You have no ground to stand upon until you keep up the Torah ...* It is because the crimes and sins committed by them (as mentioned in the verse under discussion) have cut asunder any connection that they might have had with their Lord; consequently they are not in a position to keep up the Books of God or to rely on them.

Another possibility: The verses may be connected with the preceding one (*Surely those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabaeans and the Christians ...*). Accordingly, it would confirm that the names and titles would not avail anyone at all in the matter of actual bliss and happiness; had it been of any benefit it would have prevented them from slaying the prophets and calling them liars, and would have protected them from perils of mischief and hazards of sins.

Also, possibly these verses may be taken as an elaboration of the verse: *Surely those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabaeans and the Christians* ..., which in its turn could be an elaboration of the verse: *O People of the Book! You have no ground to stand upon ...* The meaning is clear.

The clauses: *some* (*of them*) *did they call liars and some they used to slay*. Obviously, the words "some" in both clauses are the objects of the verbs coming after them. These objects have been put before their verbs to show their importance. The sentences in normal sequence will be as follows: they did call some of them liars and used to slay some others. The whole phrase completes the preceding clause: *whenever there came to them a messenger ...* The meaning is as follows: Whenever there came to them a messenger with what their hearts did not like or desire, they stood against him haughtily and rejected his call; they dealt with the messengers, sent to them, in two ways: some of them they called liars and some others they used to kill.

(al-Ṭabrisī) writes in *Majma' al-bayān*:

> "If it is asked: 'Why did God put a future tense in conjunction with a past tense, (as the clauses should literally be translated as follows), some of them did they call liars and some they will slay?' Then the reply is as follows: 'This style was used to show that it is their confirmed habit; it actually means: They called them liars and killed them and will call others liars and kill them. Apart from that, *yaqtulūn* (they will slay) comes at the end of the verse and therefore it was necessary to make it rhyme to other such endings.'"

وَحَسِبُوا أَلَّا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ فَعَمُوا وَصَمُّوا ثُمَّ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ عَمُوا وَصَمُّوا كَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

(5:71) And they thought that there would be no affliction, so they became blind and deaf; then Allah turned to them mercifully, but (again) many of them became blind and deaf; and Allah is well seeing what they do.

It completes the topic of the preceding verse. *al-Ḥusbān* (reckoning, thinking); *al-fitnah* (an ordeal that beguiles a man, or evil and tribulation in general); *al-'amā* (blindness; here it indicates not seeing the truth, not differentiating between good and evil). *al-Ṣamam* (deafness; here it means not listening to admonition, indifference to good advice). This blindness and deafness have been caused by their delusion that there would be no affliction; and apparently that delusion had emanated from their vanity and conceit that they had a special status before God because they were from the seed of Israel, and they were sons and beloveds of God. Therefore, no evil would fall to them no matter what they did and what they indulged in.

The meaning of the verse then is as follows—and God knows better: They, because of their vanity that they enjoyed the prestige of Jewishness, thought that they would not be afflicted by any evil, and would not be put on trial no matter what they did; this thought and delusion blinded their eyes—so they cannot see the truth—and deafened their ears—so they cannot listen to their Prophets' call which would have benefited them.

This interpretation favors what we have said earlier that these verses are a sort of proof of the verse: *Surely those who believe and those who are Jews* ... It shows in short that names and titles are not to avail anyone anything.

Look at these Jews who thought that they had a special prestige because they were Jews; yet this delusion did not do them any good, rather it made them blind and deaf and led them to perils of destruction and tribulation when they called the Prophets of God liars and murdered them.

then Allah turned to them mercifully, but (*again*) *many of them became blind and deaf; and Allah is well seeing what they do:* (As explained in Eng. vol.8, *al-Tawbah* means to return. When a servant of God repents from his sin, he returns to God seeking forgiveness, and when God accepts that repentance, He returns to the servant with mercy.) It shows that God had removed them away from His mercy and care, and therefore they got involved in that delusion which resulted in their blindness and deafness. But God turned to them second time accepting their repentance, and they were freed from that delusion and their eyes and ears were cured of that blindness and deafness respectively. Then they recognized themselves, knew that they were servants of God and they had no prestige or status except through piety. So they saw the truth, and listened to divine admonition delivered by the tongues of the Prophets. Thus, they realized that mere names and titles would never bring any benefit to anyone.

Again many of them became blind and deaf.

God has ascribed blindness and deafness first to the whole group, and then to many of them. It is based on justice in speech.

First: It shows that the ascription of blindness and deafness to the whole group uses the style of attaching the majority's attribute to the whole, because in reality only majority, and not the whole group, has this attribute.

Second: It however indicates that the said blindness and deafness had covered the whole group in the beginning.

Third: It shows that God's turning to them with mercy was not in vein, and had not passed away without benefit, without any effect. Rather some of them were saved through repentance, and that is why that minority had remained immune from the blindness and deafness that had affected the majority the second time.

God ends the verse on the clause: *and God is well seeing what they do*; it proves that nothing can make God oblivious of realities. When persons, other than God, bestow an honor to a group, it puts a veil on their eyes, which prevents them from seeing any defect or drawback in that group.

But God is not like that; He is the All-Seeing; He sees all aspects and facets; an outward appearance does not hide other inner layers from Him.

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ۖ وَقَالَ الْمَسِيحُ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُ مَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوَاهُ النَّارُ ۖ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ ﴿٧٢﴾

(5:72) Certainly they disbelieve who say: "Surely Allah, He is the Messiah, son of Mary"; and the Messiah said: "O Children of Israel! Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Surely whoever associates (others) with Allah, then Allah has forbidden to him the garden, and his abode is the Fire; and there shall be no helpers for the unjust."

It further explains that the Christians did not get any benefit from calling themselves Christians and tracing their origin to the Christ; as in spite of these factors, they were counted as disbelievers, because they ascribed partners to God and did not believe in Him in true sense, when they said: Surely God is the Christ, son of Mary.

The Christians have differed among themselves in explaining as to how the Christ comprises the essence of divinity. Some say that the Person of the Christ (that is, the knowledge) had branched out from the Person of the Lord (that is, the life); and this is the meaning of one of them being the Father, and the other being the Son. Some others say that the Lord was transformed and changed into the Christ. A third group says that the Lord became incarnate in the Christ. We have described this topic in detail while writing about Jesus, son of Mary, in the chapter of "The House of 'Imrān", in the third volume.[1]

However, each of the three views fits this clause: "Certainly they disbelieve who say: 'Surely God, He is the Messiah, son of Mary.'" Obviously therefore, all the Christians are included in this verdict of disbelief, because all believe in his divinity and have exceeded the limits. In short, this verse does not speak about those only who believe in incarnation.

The description of the Messiah as the son of Mary proves—or at least indicates—how and why they became disbelievers; it was because they

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.) vol.6. (Trans.)

believed in divinity of a man, son of a woman, both of whom were created from dust. How can dust become the Lord of Lords?

... and the Messiah said: "O Children of Israel! Worship Allah, my Lord, and your Lord. Surely whoever associates (*others*) *with Allah, then Allah has forbidden to him the garden, and his abode is the Fire; and there shall be no helpers for the unjust:* This argument proves their disbelief and rebuts their view through the Messiah's own words. When he said: *Worship God, my Lord and your Lord ...*, he clearly showed that he himself is a created servant like them and in the same way he needs a Lord Who would look after all his affairs and manage them. Then he said: *Surely whoever associates* (*others*) *with God, then God has forbidden to him the garden ...*; thus he declared that whoever ascribes a partner to God, he becomes a polytheist and the garden is forbidden to him.

God quotes the Messiah as saying: "then God has forbidden to him the garden, and his abode is the Fire; and there shall be no helpers for the unjust" This quotation refutes what they say about atonement. They believe that the Christ atoned the Christians' sins by offering his own self as redemption and that is why he was crucified. The beliefs of atonement and crucifixion have assured them that all their sins are forgiven in advance. They are not obliged to follow the divine law, since they would go directly to the garden, and the fire will not touch them at all. (We have described all these things under the chapter of "The House of 'Imrān", in the above mentioned volume of our book.)

What the verse quotes Jesus as saying may be seen in different chapters of the Gospels, example, the order to believe in One God[1], refutation of polytheistic worship[2], and the declaration that the unjust people would abide in the Fire[3].

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلَاثَةٍ ۘ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَٰهٍ إِلَّا إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ ۚ
وَإِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهُوا عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾

(5:73) Certainly they disbelieve who say: "Surely Allah is the third of

1 Mark, 12:29

2 Luke, 6:24

3 Matt., 13:47–50; 25:31–46

> the three"; and there is no god but the one God, and if they desist not from what they say, a painful chastisement shall befall those among them who disbelieve.

That is, He is one of the three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; and He corresponds with each of the three. It intrinsically results from their saying that the Father is god, the Son is god and the Holy Ghost is god; and He is three and He is one. They try to give the example of the sentence: Verily Zayd son of *'Amr* is man. Now, there are three things in this statement: Zayd, son of *'Amr* and man, and at the same time there is only one person to whom all three attributes are applied. But they are oblivious of the fact that if this plurality were real (not based on a subjective approach), then the persons too should have been plural; and when the said person is in reality one, then the plurality would be based on the subjective approach, and would never be real. It is beyond human understanding to imagine that Zayd combines in himself the real singularity and the real plurality at the same time.

And probably that is the reason why some Christian missionaries say that the trinity in which they believe, is an idea, which has come to them from the early fathers of the Church, and that it is a claim that cannot be proved through rational arguments or logic. They do not realize that it is incumbent on men to demand proof for any claim they hear, no matter whether it has reached them from their elders or from the coming and there is no god but one God: It is a rebuttal of their saying that God is the third of the three. It portrays that the Sublime Person of God cannot accept or admit any plurality by any means. He is One in His Person; even when His noble adjectives are attributed to Him, or His good names are ascribed to Him; it does not add anything to His One Person. Also when an adjective is added to another adjective, it does not create any numerousness or plurality in His Person. He is One Person and is not divisible at all—neither in reality nor in imagination or in reason. God is not such as may be divided into such and such parts or ingredients; nor anything can be ascribed to Him that He could become two or more. How can it be? Because it is God Who has made that thing which one wants to attach to Him in reality, imagination, or supposition.

God, the High, is One in His Person. But it is not the numerical oneness that the created things have and which gives rise to plurality and

multitude. Nor is He subject to numerousness in His Person or name or adjective. How can it be? Because this numerical oneness, and the plurality which results from this unity, both are the effects of His making and His innovation. How then can He accept the attributes, which He Himself has created?

The sentence: *and there is no god but one God*, affirms the oneness of God with an emphasis and intensity not possible in other expressions: The sentence begins with negation followed by exception, which in itself is sufficient for emphasis; then the preposition *min* (from) is added to the particle of negation which further emphasizes all inclusiveness of the statement. And lastly the clause: "one God", is used as common noun which denotes species of oneness; if it were used as proper noun, that is, except the one God, it would not have expressed the intended essence of unity.

The meaning then is as follows: There does not exist in the genes of god any species except one God Whose Oneness does not accept any plurality at all—neither in person nor in attributes, neither in reality nor in supposition. If God had said: There is no god but the One God, it would not have refuted the Christians' claim that "God is the third of the three", because they do not deny His Unity; yet they say that He is one being which has three Persons, He is One although He is three in reality.

The Christians' supposition can be rebutted only when we prove the unity from which no plurality can be formed; and it is this unity which the Qur'an asserts in the sentence: "and there is no god but One God."

It is a very fine theme to which the divine Book eludes concerning the reality of unity; and we shall further discuss it thoroughly in a special Qur'anic Discussion, then in a rational one followed by a traditional one.

... and if they desist not from what they say, a painful chastisement shall befall those among them who disbelieve: Apparently, the verse threatens them with a painful chastisement of the hereafter.

It is a fact that the theory of Trinity (as contained in the sentence, God is the third of the three) is beyond the understanding of general public. Most of the Christians receive it as a religious creed accepting its verbal formula without understanding, or hoping ever to understand, its meaning; and it is beyond the capacity of unimpaired reason to comprehend it properly. The mind places it side by side with other impossible suppositions, like a man who is no-man, a number that is neither one nor more,

neither odd nor even. That is why the general Christian public accepts it without looking at its meaning. As for their expressions—God the Father, God the son—they take it as a matter of protocol. Such people, in fact, are not trinitarians; they merely utter the words and cling to it without thinking. But the position of their elite class is quite different. It is they whom God says are responsible for creating discord in religion because of their internal rivalry. He says: *... that keep up the religion and be not divided therein; ... And they did not become divided until after the knowledge had come to them out of rivalry among themselves ...* (42:13–14).

Accordingly, the real disbelief (which does not emanate from being deemed weak), which entails rejection of the belief in Unity of God and denial of divine communications, applies to some—not all—of them. And God has addressed the threat of everlasting fire to only those who disbelieve and deny the divine communications, as He says: *And* (*as to*) *those who disbelieve in, and deny Our signs, they are the inmates of the Fire, in it they shall abide* (2:39). There are many such verses, and we have explained this topic fully under the verse 98 of the chapter 4.

Probably, that is why the verse under discussion threatens only a particular group, and not all, of the disbelievers. Or it may be an indication that there were some Christians who did not believe in Trinity, and accepted Jesus Christ only as a servant of God and His Messenger, as the history records about the Ethiopian Christians, for example.

The meaning: If the Christians do not desist from what they say (it ascribes the belief of some people to the whole community), then those among them who disbelieve (that is, believe in Trinity) shall be afflicted with a painful chastisement.

Some exegetes have opined: The clause: "a painful chastisement shall befall those among them who disbelieve", uses the noun in place of pronoun; it wants to say "shall befall them", but has used "shall befall those among them", in order to show that such thought is disbelief, and that this disbelief has invited the threatened punishment.

Comment: There would have been no difficulty in agreeing with this opinion if the verse itself had not begun with the words: *Certainly they disbelieve who say ...*

No less far fetched is another opinion that the phrase: *those among them who disbelieve*, actually means, those who disbelieve and they are these; it

is a claim without proof.

أَفَلَا يَتُوبُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَهُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٧٤﴾

(5:74) Will they not then turn to Allah and ask His forgiveness? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

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It exhorts them to repent and seek God's forgiveness and reminds them of His pardon and mercy. Alternatively, the question may stand for admonition, or for denial, that is, they do not turn to God nor do they seek His forgiveness.

مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ ۖ كَانَا يَأْكُلَانِ الطَّعَامَ ۗ انْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُبَيِّنُ لَهُمُ الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ انْظُرْ أَنَّىٰ يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

(5:75) The Messiah, son of Mary is but a messenger; messengers before him have indeed passed away; and his mother was a truthful woman; they both used to eat food. See how We make the signs clear to them, then behold, how they are turned away.

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It is a rebuttal of their claim that "*Surely Allah is the third of the three,*" or of this together with earlier mentioned claim that: "*Surely Allah, He is the Messiah, son of Mary*." These claims are based on the belief that Messiah has got in him the essence of divinity. The verse under discussion proves that Messiah is not different from other messengers of God who had appeared before him and whom God had given death. All of them, including Messiah, were human beings, mortals, who were sent by God for guidance of mankind, and none of them was a Lord apart from God. Likewise his mother, Mary, was a truthful woman who attested to the truth of the divine signs and she too was a mortal human being. Both Messiah and his mother used to eat food; and eating food with all that it entails, is words, based on the foundation of 'need.' 'Need' is the first sign of transience, and the 'needy' is something made and transient. In other words, Messiah was a transient, born of a transient; he was a servant and messenger of God, born from his mother; both mother and son worshipped God, and proceeded in their lives on the path of need and dependence—in short

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they were not Lords.

The Gospels accept the above reports. They clearly say that Mary was a young lady who believed in, and worshipped, God. They declare that Jesus was born of her, as a human from another human. They further assert that God sent Jesus to the mankind not unlike all other messengers. Also, they make it clear that Jesus and his mother used to eat food. These are the phenomena, which the Gospels explicitly declare, and they prove that he was a servant and a messenger of God.

Possibly the verse may be aiming at refuting the idea of divinity of Jesus and his mother both; because the verse: *And when Allah will say: "O Jesus son of Mary! Did you say to men, 'Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah?'"* (5:116), clearly shows that there were some people at that time who believed in the divinity of Mary too side by side with that of Jesus.

Or, the expression, taking Mary for god, may have been used in the same meaning as in the verse (9:31), which says: *They have taken their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah*. It actually points to their total submission to their scholars in a manner, which reason and *sharī'ah* do not approve.

Be it as it may. The verse accordingly altogether refutes their belief that Jesus and his mother were lords, declaring that Jesus was only a messenger like other messengers, his mother was a truthful woman, both used to consume food; and all these facts speak against their divinity.

The clause: *the messengers before him have indeed passed away ...*, reinforces the proof of his humanity, by pointing out that he is subject to life and death like other preceding messengers.

See how We make the signs clear to them, then behold, how they are turned away: The verse is addressed to the Prophet, and draws his attention to a strange phenomenon. See how God offers the clearest explanation of the clearest proof that negates the Christians' claim of the Christ's divinity, and then see how they refuse to understand these proofs. How long will they turn a blind eye to this reality? How long will their intellect remain oblivious to the falsity of their claim?

قُلْ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا ۚ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٧٦﴾

(5:76) Say: "Do you worship besides Allah that which does not control for you any harm or any profit? And Allah—He is the Hearing, the knowing."

Submission to the idea of Lordship was wide spread among the mankind since the earliest days, and especially among the general public that public worshipped idols, hoping that through that worship, the Lord would ward off evil from them and bring them benefits, as the historical researches of ancient eras have shown. So far as the worship of God—because He is God—was concerned, it was not found beyond a small circle of some chosen servants like the prophets and the divine scholars among their nations.

It is in this background that God orders His Messenger to talk to them exactly as a simple man is talked to, who follows the dictates of his simple primitive nature regarding the divine worship. It is the same manner in which He had addressed the idol-worshipers. He reminds them that what had led the man to the divine worship was his awareness that God holds the reins of good and evil, profit and harm in His hand; and man hopes to avoid harms and obtain benefits through the worship of God.

And clearly nothing besides God owns or controls any benefit or harm, because everything is owned by God and has no power whatsoever of its own. Therefore, how can any such thing be selected for worship and joined with God, the Lord, for submission? God is the Owner of him and the others, and it was necessary that He (God) should be worshipped exclusively, without extending this homage to others. It is only God who hears and answers; He hears the call of the servant and answers it; it is He who is fully aware of the needs of His servants, and neither ignores it nor is confused in it contrary to what others do—because others own only that which God gives into their possession, and can do only that which God empowers them to do.

The above discourse has made it clear that:

First: The proof contained in this verse is quite separate from the one contained in the preceding verse (*The Messiah, ... is but a messenger, ... and his mother was a truthful women; they both used to eat food*), although both depend on a common premise, that is, the Messiah and his mother both were transients and needy. The preceding verse, quoted in square brackets above, argues that they both were mortals, needy and obedient servants

of God, and anyone with such attributes cannot be a Lord or worthy of being worshipped. And the verse under discussion argues that the Messiah is a transient and needy person who himself is owned by God, and has no control on any benefit or harm. And a person in this situation cannot be accepted as a Lord or worthy of worship.

Second: The argument is based on what a simple man expects from his acts of worship, because his only aim in accepting someone as his Lord, and in worshipping Him is to ward off possible harms and acquire possible gains. But the power to control harm and benefit belongs exclusively to God. So why should anyone worship other than God? It is essential that such submission and worship (that is, to other than God) be totally rejected.

Third: In the clause: *that which does not control for you any harm or any profit*, the relative pronoun *mā* (that, which) has been used, which is reserved for other than rational beings, even though the Messiah was a rational person. It is because the same proof is used against those who worship insensate things, like idol-worshipers; and the Messiah's rationality has no effect on the perfection of this proof—it is applicable against all "worshipped" things other than God.

Moreover, the creatures (all things besides God) even if they do have perception and understanding, do not possess that perception and understanding by their own power, nor do they own other aspects of their 'being'. God says: Surely those whom you call on besides Allah are in a state of subjugation, like yourselves; therefore call on them, then let them answer you if you are truthful. Have they feet with which they walk, or have they hands with which they strike, or have they eyes with which they see, or have they ears with which they hear? Say: "Call your associates, then make a struggle (to prevail) against me and give me no respite" (7:194–5).

In the clause: *any harm or any profit*, harm precedes profit; this too follows the same pattern to which the simple primitive nature invites, as described above. Man by nature thinks that whatever blessings and benefits he has got are owned by him, are his to remain; he does not imagine that these benefits might be lost, and does not anticipate the sorrow or pain that would follow that loss. But as for the harm which he presently experiences, and the benefits and blessings which are lost and he presently feels the pain of that loss, the nature alerts him to take refuge in a Lord Who

would ward off that loss and harm, and would restore the lost blessings; as God says: *And when affliction touches a man, he calls on Us, whether lying on his side or sitting or standing; but when We remove his affliction from him, he passes on as though he had never called on Us on account of an affliction that touched him;* (10:12). *And if We make him taste mercy from Us after distress that has touched him, he would most certainly say: "This is of me ..."* (41:50). *And when We show favor to man, he turns aside and withdraws himself; and when evil touches him, he makes lengthy supplications* (41:51).

It all proves that a touch of affliction induces a man to submit to the Lord and worship him, rather more than gaining a profit does. That is why in the clause: "that which does not control for you any harm or any profit", 'harm' precedes 'profit'. The same reason applies to other similar expressions, like: *And they have taken besides Him gods, who do not create anything while they are themselves created, and they control not for themselves any harm or profit, and they control not death, nor life, nor raising* (*the dead*) *to life* (25:3).

Fourth: The complete verse: *Say: 'Do you worship besides God ... the Knowing,'* proves that worship is exclusively reserved for God, and none else should be joined with Him in it. This short verse actually contains two proofs: One, Submission to a God and worshipping Him is resorted to for averting harm and acquiring benefit; as such, it is necessary that the worshipped God should control the harm and benefit. Therefore, it is not correct to worship one who has no control on anything. Two, only God is the Hearing, Who answers the call of the distressed, and knows the true nature of his need; none other than God has this attribute. Therefore, it is necessary to worship Him exclusively, without joining others to Him.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا أَهْوَاءَ قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّوا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَضَلُّوا كَثِيرًا وَضَلُّوا عَنْ سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ ﴿٧٧﴾

(5:77) Say: "O People of the Book! Be not unduly immoderate in your religion, and do not follow the low desires of people who went astray before and led many astray and went astray from the right path."

Another call to the Prophet, ordering him to invite the People of the Book to abandon immoderation in their religion. The People of the Book,

and especially the Christians, are entangled in it.[1] The divine religion, as explained by His revealed Books, orders the people to believe in one God Who has no partner, and forbids believing in any partner to Him. The People of the Book, the Jews, and the Christians in general, were afflicted with this disease, although the condition of the Christians was more ignominious and abominable. God says: *And the Jews say: "Ezra is the son of Allah"; and the Christians say: "The Messiah is the son of Allah"; these are the words of their mouths; they imitate the sayings of those who disbelieved before; may Allah destroy them; how they are turned away! They have taken their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah, and* (*also*) *the Messiah son of Mary; and they were not enjoined but that they should worship one God only, there is no god but He; far from His glory be what they set up* (*with Him*), (9:30–31).

Although the belief, that Ezra is the son of God, is apparently not found today in the Jewish community, but the verse testifies that such as belief was prevalent at the time of the Qur'anic revelation.

Apparently, son of God was an honorific title which they used for Ezra, in view of the valuable services he rendered and the good he did to them: He brought them back to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity; and rewrote the Torah after it was lost in the devastative attack of Nebuchanazzar. The Jews treated the sonship of God as an honorific title, in the same way as the Christians nowadays treat "fatherhood", as they call the Popes, bishops and priest Fathers—the word Pope itself means father. God says: And the Jews and the Christians say: *We are the sons of Allah and his beloved ones* (5:18). Further, the verse 9:31 quoted earlier (*They have taken their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah*, and (also) *the Messiah son of Mary*) indicates it, as it mentions only the Messiah, but not Ezra. It means that Ezra is included in the expression:(their doctors of law and their monks. In other words they called Ezra the son of God in the same sense as they name their scholars and monks as sons of God. However, they chose to mention his name in particular because he had done much good to them, as described above.

In short, they had placed some of their prophets, scholars and monks on the throne of lordship, and submitted to them in a manner that is

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1 *al-Ghālī* (one who transgresses the limit, on the side of excess); its opposite is *al-qālī* (one who does not reach the required goal). (Auth.)

reserved exclusively for God. It was their inordinacy in religion that God forbids them here through his Prophet.

The phrase: *unduly immoderate in your religion*, if literally translated would be written as, immoderate without truth in your religion. In fact, immoderation is always without truth, it can never be with truth. Yet, here the Qur'an qualifies it with the word, unduly or without truth, in order to put emphasis on the prohibition of immoderation; and also to remind the hearer of a concomitant item with its principal—after all, he had forgotten or nearly forgotten this indispensability when he indulged in inordinacy.

The reason does not reject the idea of using the word, father, for God, provided its meaning is purified of all material and physical defects and stigmas—if it is taken in the meaning of "One who has control on creation and upbringing." The same applies to the word, son, when used for God in its non-physical sense. But the *sharī'ah* strictly forbids use of these words for God, because we are obliged to use only those names for Him, which He has approved. We cannot use self-invented names or titles for Him, because it would lead to corruption and scandals. We have only to look at the Jews and the Christians—and especially the latter to realize how much depravity they were afflicted with through the Church 'fathers' in all those long centuries. The things are not much better even today!

... and do not follow the low desires of people who went astray before and led many astray and went astray from the right path: Apparently the context shows that the people who went astray before and whose low desires were not to be followed, were the leaders whose opinions and orders were obeyed. They themselves went astray by holding fast to their views and opinions, and led many astray as others followed them. Thus, their going astray from the right path was the sum total of their going astray and leading astray—it was a compound error.

Also, the context shows that the people whose low desires were not to be followed were the idol-worshipers. The verse is addressed to the whole community of the People of the Book and not only to those who were contemporaries of the Prophet. So, it cannot be said that their later generations are here admonished not to follow their forefathers. This interpretation is supported, rather it is proved, by the words of God: *And the Jews say: "Ezra is the son of Allah"; and the Christians say: "The Messiah is the son of Allah"; these are the words of their mouths; they imitate the saying of*

those who disbelieved before (9:30).

This is then the historical fact as analyzed by the Qur'an. It indicates that the belief in divine fatherhood and sonship has infiltrated into People of the Book from the idol-worshipers who had passed before them. We have described in the third volume of this book (in chapter 3, story of Jesus[1]) that this belief was prevalent among the Hindus and the Buddhists of India and China, as well as in ancient Egypt and other places. Then, gradually, it was brought into Christian community, clothed in religious dress by its religious leaders. The name remained monotheistic and the meaning became idolatrous.

لُعِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَىٰ لِسَانِ دَاوُودَ وَعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ كَانُوا لَا يَتَنَاهَوْنَ عَنْ مُنْكَرٍ فَعَلُوهُ ۚ لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

(5:78–79) Those who disbelieved from among the Children of Israel were cursed by the tongue of David and Jesus, son of Mary; this was because they disobeyed and used to exceed the limit. They used not to forbid each other the hateful things (which) they did; certainly evil was that which they did.

It reveals that their prophets cursed the disbelievers from among them. It adversely alludes to the Jews who were cursed by their own prophets, and it was because they exceeded the limit, and continued in this transgression generation after generation. The words: "They used not to forbid evil was that which they did", explain that transgression.

تَرَىٰ كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ يَتَوَلَّوْنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ لَبِئْسَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لَهُمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ أَنْ سَخِطَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَفِي الْعَذَابِ هُمْ خَالِدُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

(5:80) You will see many of them befriending those who disbelieve; certainly evil is that which their souls have sent before for them, that Allah became displeased with them and in chastisement shall they abide.

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol.6. (Trans.)

It is a perceivable proof that they had exceeded the limit. If they had any respect for their religion, they would have adhered to it and not exceeded its limit. As a concomitant of that, it was necessary for them to befriend those who believe in one God, and avoid those who disbelieve. If a nation respects some things and considers them sacred, and another group has animosity towards those things, this group would be an enemy of the nation. Now, if that nation befriends this group, it would mean that the nation had abandoned that thing which it hitherto considered sacred. And a friend of enemy is enemy. Then God condemns them in these words: "certainly evil is that which their souls have sent before for them." It points to their befriending the disbelievers as because of their low desires. Consequently, its recompense was, "that God became displeased with them and in chastisement shall they abide." The verse has put the recompense in place of action. It is as though their souls had sent for them the recompense by sending ahead the action.

وَلَوْ كَانُوا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالنَّبِيِّ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مَا اتَّخَذُوهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ وَلَٰكِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

(5:81) And had they believed in Allah and the Prophet and what was revealed to him, they would not have taken them for friends, but most of them are transgressors.

If these People of the Book had believed in God and the Prophet Muḥammad and what was revealed to him; or if they had believed in their own prophet, example, Moses and what was revealed to him, that is, the Torah, they would not have taken those disbelievers for friends, because Islam cuts asunder all worldly ties; but most of them are transgressors, recalcitrants from belief.

Some people have suggested another explanation: They have taken the pronouns in "they believed" and "them (for friends)", as referring to "those who disbelieve" (in the preceding verse). Accordingly, the meaning will be as follows: If those disbelievers, whom the People of the Book have taken for friends, had believed in God, the Prophet Muḥammad and the Qur'an, these People of the Book would not have taken them for friends. They have only befriended them because they disbelieve in the Prophet and the Qur'an.

Comment: There is no difficulty in accepting this interpretation, but the end phrase: "but most of them are transgressors", does not agree with it.

لَتَجِدَنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا ۖ وَلَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُم مَّوَدَّةً لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصَارَىٰ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِّيسِينَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

(5:82) Certainly you will find the most violent of people in enmity for those who believe (to be) the Jews and those who are polytheists, and you will certainly find the nearest in friendship to those who believe (to be) those who say: "We are Christians"; this is because there are priests and monks among them and because they do not behave proudly.

God has described in the preceding verses the depravities found in the People of the Book in general, and some which apply to only a particular group among them, example, the saying of the Jews that the hand of God is tied up; and the saying of the Christians that surely God, He is the Messiah son of Mary. Now, He describes their attitude *vis-à-vis* the believers and Islam; and adds to it the attitude of the polytheists, in order to present a complete picture of the non-Muslim communities' mental disposition towards Islam, and how near or far they are from accepting it. Its sum total is that the Christians are the nearest of all those groups in friendship to the Muslims and readier to listen to the call of the truth.

They have been counted as the nearest in friendship to the believers, because a group of them did believe in the Holy Prophet as the next verse shows: And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger you will see their eyes overflowing with tears on account of the truth that they recognize; they say: *Our Lord! We believe, so write us down with the witnesses* (*of truth*) (5:83).

However, if acceptance of faith by a group can justify its ascription to the whole community, then the Jews and the polytheists too must be joined with the Christians in this matter, because a Jewish group led by ʿAbdullāh b. Salām had entered into Islam, and so had a lot of the polytheists of Arabia—in fact, the latter formed the majority of the Muslims at that time. In this background, singling the Christians out for the praise contained

in the above verse—to the exclusion of the Jews and polytheists—points to their sincere acceptance of the call of Islam, even when they had other options than entering into Islam: they could have opted to continue on their religion and pay *jizyah*, or to fight against Islam.

The case of the polytheists was totally different, because they had no alternative to acceptance of Islam (or to fight). In this situation, the fact that the majority of Muslims had come from that group does not prove that they had entered into Islam sincerely. This is quite apart from the sufferings they inflicted upon the Prophet and the tortures they wreaked on Muslims.

Coming to the Jews, although they had the same alternatives as the Christians, and they could remain on their religion with payment of *jizyah*, yet they continued in their haughtiness, became harder in their bigotry, and turned to double dealing and deception. They broke their covenants, eagerly waited calamities to befall the Muslims and dealt to them bitterest deal.

The attitude the Christians had towards the Prophet and the Muslims, and their attraction to Islam; and also the enmity of the Jews and polytheists toward the divine religion and their sustained arrogance and bigotry, have continued exactly in the same manner even after the Prophet. Innumerable were the Christians who answered the call to Islam during the past centuries, while the number of the Jews and the polytheists was so insignificant. These unchanged characteristics in both groups confirm what the Mighty Book had indicated.

The verse: *Certainly you will find the most violent …*, lays down a general all-inclusive principle, although it is addressed to the Prophet alone. It is the style used in many preceding verses: *You will see many of them befriending those who disbelieve …* (5:80); *And you will see many of them striving with one another …* (5:62). All these verses use the second person singular pronoun; but their connotation is general.

… this is because there are priests and monks among them and because they do not behave proudly: *al-Qissīs* (priest, clergyman); *al-ruhbān* is plural of *al-rāhib*, sometimes it is used as singular. al-Rāghib has said:

> "*al-rahbah* and *al-ruhb* mean to fear with cautiousness … *al-tarahhub* (devoutness); *al-ruhbāniyyah* (excessive devotion based on extreme fear (of God); monasticism). God says: *and* (*as for*)

> *monasticism, they innovated it* (57:27). *al-Ruhbān* is used both as a singular and a plural; those who take it as singular, make its plural *ruhābīn*."

God has given three reasons for the Christians being the nearest in friendship to the believers, and of their geniality and cordiality towards the Muslims; these reasons are their exclusive attributes, which are not found in the Jews and the polytheists:

(1) There are priests among them.
(2) They are monks and ascetics.
(3) They are not proud.

These three are the keys to prepare them for felicity.

The felicity of religious life depends on good deeds, which emanate from knowledge. You may say: that felicity is achieved when one believes in the Truth and acts accordingly. He, first of all, needs knowledge in order to perceive the right of religion and it is the religion of truth. However, mere perception of truth is not enough to prepare him to act according to its dictates unless and until man removes from his soul the opposite factors, that is, the arrogance which prevents him from submitting to truth, the bigotry, prejudice, and other such things. When man is armed with beneficial knowledge, and becomes ready to deal justly *vis-à-vis* the truth by discarding haughtiness and arrogance, then he is ready to submit to the truth by acting according to its demands provided the environment is not incompatible to it, because compatibility of environment with action has great effect on that action. The activities, which are performed, by the society, where children grow up in that atmosphere; their sub-conscience forms a habit to go on doing it and it continues generation after generation. The conscious mind is not given a chance to think over it, to ponder or meditate as to how to get rid of that habit—even if he understands that the habit is harmful and against his felicity. The same is the case of good deeds and activities if they become deep-rooted in the society—it is extremely difficult to neglect them. That is why it is said that habit is second nature. Also it is because of this factor that when one intends to do something, which one does not like, it seems very difficult to accomplish, but with each repetition its difficulty is decreased.

When a man, therefore, makes sure that a certain deed is correct and good, and removes from his soul the tendency of obstinacy and

stubbornness by negating haughtiness, then it will be fully helpful to him if he sees another person doing that deed, as it would prove to him that the said deed is not beyond his own power.

This shows that the society will be ready to accept a truth if there are in it knowledgeable persons who know it and teach it, and there are people who act upon that truth, so that general public ascertains that the deed is not impossible and is really good, and finally the general public is accustomed to submit to the truth and not to be too proud to accept it when it appears before their eyes.

It is because of these factors that God has said about Christians that they are nearer to accept the call of the true religion because they have their religious scholars and monks who do not behave proudly. Their scholars continue to teach them cognizance of truth and realities of religion—verbally. Their ascetics remind them the greatness of their Lord and the importance of their felicity in this world and the next—practically. And they do not have pride and haughtiness, which would prevent them from accepting the truth.

As for the Jews, they had their own scholars, no doubt; but they behaved proudly, and their arrogance and stubbornness did not let them be prepared for accepting the truth.

And as for the polytheists, they did not have any religious scholar or ascetics, and on top of that, they did behave arrogantly.

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰ أَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۖ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

(5:83) And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger, you will see their eyes over-flowing with tears on account of the truth that they recognize; they say: "Our Lord! We believe, so write us down with the witnesses (of truth).

Eyes overflowing with tears that is, shedding plentiful tears; *min in min al-dam'* (with tears) denotes beginning; and in *mimmā 'arafū* (that they recognize) shows emergence; and in *mina 'l-ḥaqq* (of the truth) gives the explanation.

وَمَا لَنَا لَا نُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَنَطْمَعُ أَنْ يُدْخِلَنَا رَبُّنَا مَعَ

الْقَوْمِ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾

(5:84) And what (reason) have we that we should not believe in Allah and in the truth that has come to us, while we earnestly desire that our Lord should cause us to enter with the good people?."

The word, "cause us to enter", implies the meaning, put us/place us; that is why it is followed by the preposition *ma'* (with).

The meaning: that our Lord should place us with the good people and include us among them.

The words and the deeds which God has attributed to them prove what He has said about them that they are nearest in friendship to the believers, and ascertain that they possess beneficial knowledge and good deed and they surrender to the truth because there are among them priests and monks and they do not behave proudly.

فَأَثَابَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِمَا قَالُوا جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٨٦﴾

(5:85–86) Therefore Allah rewarded them on account of what they said, with gardens in which rivers flow to abide in them; and this is the reward of those who do good. And (as for) those who disbelieve and reject Our signs, these are the companions of the flame.

The first verse here describes, their reward, and the second one recompense of those who oppose them. Thus, all groups are dealt with.

Examining Narrations

(1) (al-Ṣadūq) narrates through his chain from al-Riḍā from his forefathers from ʿAlī that the clause: *they both used to eat food*, means: "They both evacuated the bowels." (*Maʾāni al-akhbār*)

Author's comment: al-ʿAyyāshī has narrated it in his *al-Tafsīr*.

(2) (al-Kulaynī) narrates through his chain from Abū ʿUbaydah al-Ḥadhdhāʾ from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said about the word of God: Those who disbelieved from among the Children of Israel were cursed by the tongue of David and Jesus, "Swines are (those

who were cursed) by the tongue of David, and monkeys by the tongue of Jesus son of Mary." (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comment: Also, al-Qummī and al-ʿAyyāshī have narrated it from the same Imam. The Sunnī traditions from Mujāhid and Qatādah, etc. narrate that monkeys were cursed by the tongue of David and swines by the tongue of Jesus son of Mary; and some Shīʾah traditions agree with it, as will be seen later.

(3) Abū Jaʾfar said: "As for David, he cursed the people of Eilat, when they transgressed on their Sabbath day, and their transgression had occurred in his days. So he said, 'O God! Dress them with curse like robe and like belt on waist'. So God transformed them into monkeys. And as for Jesus, he cursed those to whom the food was sent down and then they disbelieved." Then Abū Jaʾfar, said, "They befriended tyrant kings and made their (that is, kings') desires fair seeming to them in order to get (a share) from their world." (*Majmaʾ al-bayān*)

Author's comment: The Qur'an supports this report that the people of the Sabbath were transformed into monkeys. God says: *And certainly you have known those among you who exceeded the limits of the Sabbath, so We said to them: "Be apes, despised and hated"* (2:65). And ask them about the town which stood by the sea; when they exceeded the limits of the Sabbath, when their fish came to them on the day of their Sabbath, appearing on the surface of the water, and on the day on which they did not keep the Sabbath they did not come to them; And when a party of them said: "Why do you admonish a people whom God would destroy or whom He would chastise with a severe chastisement?" They said: "To be free from blame before your Lord, and that haply they may guard (against evil)" Therefore when they revoltingly persisted in what they had been forbidden, We said to them: "*Be apes, despised and hated*" (7:163–6).

(4) ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd, Abu al-Shaykh, al-Ṭabarānī, and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from Ibn Masʾūd that he said, "The Messenger of God, said, 'Verily whenever the Children of Israel committed a sin, their scholars forbade them (to do it) in rebuke, and then they sat with them and ate and drank with them as if they had not committed any sin yesterday. So when God saw this conduct of theirs, He let discord to appear among them, and cursed them

by the tongue of a prophet.' Then the Messenger of God said, 'By God! You will most certainly enjoin the right and forbid the wrong; and you most certainly bend them to turn to truth; otherwise, God will most certainly let discord appear among you, and will most certainly curse you as He had cursed them.'" (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(5) ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd has narrated from Maʾādh b. Jabal that he said, "The Messenger of God, said, 'Accept gift as long as it is gift; and if it is a bribe to divert you from your religion, then do not take it. But you shall never leave it—need and fear shall not let you avoid it. Surely the children of Gog have arrived. And certainly the handmill of Islam will soon start going round, so wherever the Qur'an revolves, you should revolve with it. It is about to happen that the worldly power and the Qur'an shall fight each other and separate. Surely soon you will get kings who will judge you according to one standard and judge themselves with another standard; if you would obey them they would lead you astray, and if you would disobey them they would kill you.'

"They (companions) said, 'How should we (behave) if we found that (era)?' He said, 'You should be like the companions of Jesus. They were sawed with handsaws and hoisted on wood (that is, crucified). Death in obedience (of God) is better than life in disobedience. Surely the first defect that appeared in the Children of Israel was that they used to enjoin the good and forbid the evil, rebuking (the evil-doer), and then when one of them met the fellow whom he used to rebuke, he ate and drank with him as though he had not rebuked him for anything. So God cursed them by the tongue of David, and it was because they disobeyed and used to exceed the limit. (I swear) by Him in Whose hand my soul is! You should certainly enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil; otherwise God will most certainly impose your evil ones as rulers over you, then your good ones will call (on God) and their call will not be answered. (I swear) by Him in Whose hand my soul is! You should most certainly enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and you will most certainly take the hand of the unjust and twist it over him; otherwise God will cause discord to appear

among you.'" (*ibid.*)

(6) Ibn Rāhwayh, al-Bukhārī (in *al-Waḥdāniyyāt*), Ibn al-Sakan, Ibn Mandah, al-Bāwardī (in *Ma'rifat al-ṣaḥābah*), al-Ṭabarānī, Abū Nu'aym, and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from Ibn Abzī, from his father that he said, "The Messenger of God, delivered a sermon; he offered thanks to God and praised Him; then he mentioned some groups of the Muslims and lauded them in good terms; thereafter he said, 'What has happened to some people that they do not teach their neighbors and do not impart to them the knowledge of religion? Why they do not enjoin them (to do good) and do not forbid them (the evil)? And why is it that some people do not learn from their neighbors, and do not acquire religious knowledge and do not become knowledgeable? (I swear) by Him in Whose hand my soul is! They should most certainly teach their neighbors, or they should most certainly acquire religious knowledge, or they should most certainly become knowledgeable; otherwise I shall most certainly hasten to their chastisement in this world.'

"Thereafter he came down and entered his house. The companions of the Messenger of God said, 'Whom does he mean by this talk?' They said, 'We do not know whom does he mean by this talk except the tribe of Ash'arites. (They are) religious scholars, knowledgeable and they have neighbors, uncouth, ignorant.'

"Then a group of Ash'arites came together and visited the Prophet. They said, 'You mentioned some groups of Muslims in good (terms) and mentioned us in bad (terms); so what should we do?' The Messenger of God said, 'You should most certainly teach your neighbors, and most certainly give them religious knowledge, and most certainly enjoin them and forbid them; otherwise I shall most certainly hasten to your chastisement in this world.' They said, 'O Messenger of God! Give us one year's time; as in that one year we shall teach them and they shall learn.' So he gave them time of one year. Then the Messenger of God recited: Those who disbelieved from among the Children of Israel were cursed by the tongue of David and Jesus son of Mary; this was because they disobeyed and used to exceed the limit. They used not to forbid each other

the hateful things (which) they did; certainly evil was that which they did. (*ibid.*)

(7) Muḥammad b. al-Haytham al-Tamīmī narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said about the word of God, They used not to forbid each other the hateful things (which) they did; certainly evil was that which they did: "Well, they did not enter their places nor did they sit in their sessions; but when they met them, they showed gladness on seeing them and showed friendliness towards them." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(8) Marwān narrates through some of his companions, from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he described the Christians and their enmity (towards Muslims); then he mentioned the word of God: that is because there are priests and monks among them and because they do not behave proudly, (and) said, "Those were the people who were between Jesus and Muḥammad, (who) were awaiting coming of Muḥammad." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: Apparently the verse is general and not restricted to a certain period. Probably, the tradition means that the praise is applied to them only as long as they did not change, exactly as the praise of the Muslims too is conditional to their not changing.

(9) ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abu al-Shaykh and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from Saʾīd b. Jubayr that he said explaining the word of God: that is because there are priests and monks among them ... "It refers to the messengers of Negus whom he sent with (news of) his Islam and that of his people; they were seventy persons whom he selected from among his nation, good ones. So good is in religious knowledge and age." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(10) Another version says: He sent to the Messenger of God thirty men from among his good companions. They came to him, and he recited before them the chapter of Yā-Sīn; so they wept when they heard the Qur'an and recognized that it was truth. Therefore, God revealed about them: *that is because there are priests and monks among them* ... Also it was revealed about them: (*As to*) *those whom We gave the Book before it, they are believers in it. And when it is recited to them they say: "We believe in it; surely it is the truth*

from our Lord; surely we were submitters before it." These shall be granted their reward twice ... (28:52–54). (*ibid.*)

(11) Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said, "The Messenger of God, while in Mecca, was afraid of polytheists regarding his companions. So he sent Jaʾfar b. Abī Ṭālib, Ibn Masʾūd and ʿUthmān b. Maẓʾūn with a party of his companions to Negus, the king of Ethiopia. When the news reached the polytheists, they sent ʿAmr b. al-ʾĀṣ with a group of theirs. It is said that they arrived at Negus' (court) before the companions of the Prophet, and said, 'Indeed, has appeared among us a man who has declared as foolish the wisdom and aspirations of Quraysh; he thinks he is a prophet. He has sent a party to you in order to sabotage your nation against you; therefore, we liked to come to you and give you his report.'

"(Negus) said, 'If they came to me, I'll look into what they say.' When the companions of the Messenger of God arrived (there), they came to the gate of Negus and said (to the door-keeper), 'Take permission for the friends of God.' (Negus) said, 'Give permission to them; welcome to the friends of God.' When they came to him, they greeted him with peace. The group of the polytheists said, 'Do you not see, O King! That we have told you the truth, and they have not greeted you with the formula you are (usually) addressed with.' (The King) said to them (the Muslims): 'What has prevented you from greeting me with my (usual) greeting?' They said, 'We have greeted you with the greeting of the people of Garden, and the greeting of the angels.'

"Then he said to them, 'What does your companion say about Jesus and his mother?' They said, 'He says, "A servant of God and His Messenger; a word from God and a spirit from Him which He sent to Mary"; and he says about Mary that she was a virgin, pure and untouched.' The King took up a (small) piece of wood from the earth and said, 'Jesus and his mother were not more than what your companion says even to the extent of this wood.' The polytheist did not like his words and their faces underwent a change.

(12) "Then (Negus) said, 'Would you recite something from what has been revealed to you?' They said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Then recite (it).'

> They began to recite. And there were around the King, priests, monks, and all other Christians. A group of the priests and monks (was so overwhelmed that) whenever they recited a verse, their (the Christians') eyes overflowed with tears because of what they recognized of the truth. God says: this is because there are priests and monks among them and because they do not behave proudly. And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears on account of the truth that they recognize." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: al-Qummī has narrated in his *al-Tafsīr* this event in a lengthy tradition, and it says at the end: (The envoys sent by Negus) returned to him and gave him the information about the Messenger of God, and recited to him what the Prophet had recited to them. So, Negus wept and the priests wept, then he became Muslim but did not disclose his Islam to the Ethiopians, because he was afraid of them regarding his life. So he came out of Ethiopia proceeding to the Prophet; when he crossed the sea, he expired.[1]

Meaning of *Tawḥīd* in the Qur'an

A deep thinker on matters of general cognizance certainly recognizes that the subject of *tawḥīd* (monotheism, oneness of God) is the deepest of all problems. It is the most difficult to imagine and conceive, and most entangled to unravel, because it is highly above the general topics which human understanding grasps, and much beyond the common propositions which minds are familiar with.

Such a complicated subject is bound to be perceived in diverse ways by different minds, because of multiplicity of thinking which mankind is created with, as every individual has a separate body construction, and this leads to diversity of the senses in their actions. This in its turn affects thought and understanding ranging from sharp intelligence to idiocy, from steadfastness to deviation. All this is generally accepted and no one has any doubt about it. The Qur'an has affirmed this difference and diversity in various places. God says: *Say: Are those who know and those who do not know alike? Only those possessed of understanding shall bear in mind*

1 The story of Negus' journeying towards Mecca and dying on the way is not supported by history. (Trans.)

(39:9); *Therefore turn aside from him who turns his back upon Our reminder and does not desire anything but this world's life. That is the* (*last*) *reach of their knowledge;* (53:29–30); *... but what is the matter with these people that well-nigh they do not understand what is told* (*them*)*?* (4:78); *... See how we make the signs clear to them, then behold, how they are turned away* (5:75).

A clear example of this difference in understanding is their difference in cognizance of the meaning of oneness of God. Although the human nature through its secret inspiration has united all men together in believing that there is a Creator, yet there is a great difference and vast chasm between one mind and the other in grasping its meaning.

Some people's intellect led them to idol-worship. He carves idols and statues from wood and stone, even from (flour,) cheese and clay made with urine of goats and sheep. Then he declares these to be partners and colleagues of God. He worships God exactly as he worships these idols, and asks God for his needs as he asks them, and shows devotion to Him as he does to them. It did not take him long to give precedence to those idols over God; he came closer to them and left Him; put all his needs in their hands and discarded Him.

Utmost that such a man can understand about the existence of God is what he does about his idols, which were made by himself or by another man like himself. That is why they ascribed to God the attribute of oneness in the same way as they did to each of their idols, and it was the oneness in number; one is a number from which other numbers are made. God says: *And they wonder that there has come to them a Warner from among themselves, and the disbelievers say: "This is an enchanter, a liar." What! Makes he the gods a single God? A strange thing is this, to be sure!* (38:4–5)

These people looked at the Qur'anic call to monotheism as a call to numerical oneness, as opposed to numerical multitude. God says: *And your God is one God! There is no god but He; ...* (2:163); *He is the Living, there is no god but He, therefore call on Him, being sincere to Him in obedience* (40:65); apart from many verses which call man to discard numerous gods and turn his face exclusively to the One God. Also, He says: *... and our God and your God is One ...* (29:46); in addition to other verses which call men not to be divided by worshipping different gods, as every nation, group and tribe used to worship a god which exclusively belonged to it, and discarded others' gods.

Qur'an's sublime teachings negate numerical unity concerning God; a thing, which is numerically one, must inevitably be distinguished from another similar one through confinement of limit and dimension. For example, there is water in a reservoir; if we put it in various pots, then the water in each pot would be a unit, separate from other units found in other pots. Likewise, Zayd is one man because he does not have the particulars found in other men. If there were no such distinction, their humanity would not be called one or more numerically.

Limitedness of existence compels the numerical one to be one. When this unity is curtailed in some aspects, the numerical multitude is formed; for example, when some units gather together to form a group.

God is the Subduer, not subdued; the Victor whom nothing can subjugate, as the Qur'anic teachings make clear. As such, numerical unity or numerousness *vis-à-vis* God is unimaginable. God says *and He is the One, the Subduer* (13:16); *... are sundry lords better or Allah the One the Subduer? You do not worship besides Him but names, which you have named, you and your fathers; ...* (12: 39–40); *... and there is no god but Allah, the One, the Subduer* (38:65); *If Allah had intended to take a son to Himself, He would surely choose those He pleases from what He has created. Glory be to Him! He is Allah, the One, the Subduer* (39:4).

These verses, in their contexts, negate every unity which stands face to face with opposite numerousness: No matter whether it is numerical unity, like a single member of a species, which if joined with another member would become two. (This individual member is subdued by the limit imposed on it by the second member, who is distinguished from it.) Or, if it is unity in species genes or any other general conception, parallel to numerousness of the same type. For example, when man as a species, is looked at side by side with other species, e.g. horse, cow, sheep, etc., is subdued by the limit imposed on it by the other species.

However, we know that nothing can subdue God in any aspect, be it His person, His attributes, or His actions. He is the Subduer, above all things; nothing can impose any limit on Him. He is Existent without any taint of non-existence; He is the Truth that no nullity can touch Him; the Living that death cannot come near Him; the Knowing that ignorance cannot creep to Him; the Powerful that weakness cannot overcome Him; the Owner and the King that nothing can possess Him, and the Mighty

Who is far above meekness—and so on. He has the essence of perfection. If you want to understand more this Qur'anic reality, then imagine one thing finite, and another infinite. You will find that the infinite encompasses the finite in a way that the finite does not push the infinite away from its perfection; rather, the infinite dominates the finite and is present in every aspect of the finite's perfection; the infinite stands independently, and is the witness over the finite and encompasses it. Keeping this scenario in view, look at the connotation of these verses: *Is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that He is a witness over all things? Now surely they are in doubt as to the meeting of their Lord; now surely He encompasses all things* (41:53–54).

This is what is proved by all those verses that describe divine attributes and which clearly or apparently shows all-inclusiveness. For examples: *Allah—there is no god but He; ...* (20:8); *... and they shall know that Allah is the evident Truth* (24:25); *He is the Living, there is no god but He ...* (40:65); *... and He is the Knowing, the Powerful* (30:54); *... that the power is wholly Allah's ...* (2:165); *... to Him belongs the kingdom, and to Him is due* (*all*) *praise ...* (64:1); *... surely might is wholly Allah's ...* (10:65); *The truth is from your Lord, ...* (2:147); *... you are the ones who stand in need of Allah, and Allah is He Who is the Self-sufficient, the Praised one* (35:15), in addition to other many similar verses.

As you see, these verses loudly declare that every imaginable perfection originally belongs to God; others do not have any perfection unless and until He gives it to them; even then He does not lose any perfection by giving it to the others, contrary to what happens to us when we give something into others' possession—that we lose our hold on it and our possession of it is negated.

In this backdrop, when we imagine a perfect thing *vis-à-vis* God, with a view to make it His second and His partner, we will find that all its perfection actually belongs to God and comes from Him; He is the Truth, Who owns everything; and whatever is besides Him is worthless and owns nothing for itself. God says: *... and they control not for themselves any harm or benefit, and they control not death, nor life, nor raising* (*the dead*) *to life* (25:3).

It is this connotation that negates numerical unity in respect of God. Had He been numerically one, He would have been confined to His own person and unable to encompass other beings; and then it would have been

possible in reason to suppose His second like Him—no matter whether that second could exist in reality or was impossible to exist. Then the reason could attribute numerousness to Him looking at His person, even if such multitude was impossible in actuality. But it is not so.

He is One, that is, His existence cannot be limited with any limit; otherwise it would have been possible to imagine His second beyond that limit. This is the connotation of the chapter of "The Unity": *Say:* "*He, Allah, is Unique. Allah is He on Whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And none is like unto Him.*" The word *aḥad* denotes uniqueness. It does not mean one, so that we may start counting, two, three, and so on. This attribute removes the possibility of numbering. In a negative sentence it is translated as "no one" or "nobody." They say: 'No one came to me.' It negates coming of one, two or more. God says: *And if one of the idolators seek protection from you, grant him protection* (9:6).

The 'one' here encompasses one, two and group; no number is out of its circle. Also He says: ... *or one of you come from the privy* (5:6).

Here too 'one' covers all numbers endlessly.

The word One or Unique in the first verse (of the chapter of "The Unity") is used in a positive sentence. There is no negation, nor is it qualified with any adjective or genitive construction; and it connotes that in His essence God is such as no like unto Him can even be imagined—be it one or more. Therefore, regardless of its condition in actuality, it is impossible even to imagine it properly.

God has gone ahead, mentioning the attribute of *al-ṣamad*: It means something solid, not hollow. (That is why it is translated as the One on Whom all depend and Who does not depend on anything.)

Then it says: "He begets not", followed by, "nor is He begotten", and finally comes: "And none is like unto Him."

The last three attributes negate such factors that impose some limits and isolation.

This is the reason why the attributes imagined or invented by the creatures in respect of God cannot be applied to Him properly. God says: *Glory be to Allah* (*for freedom*) *from what they describe; except the servants of Allah, freed* (*from sins*) (37:159–60); ... *they do not comprehend Him in knowledge* (20:110). The fact is that the attributes of perfection that we use for God are limited attributes, and far be it from His glory to be subject to

limitation and restriction. This was the idea which the Prophet expressed in his famous words: "I do not count Your praise, You are as You have praised Yourself."

This meaning of unity removes the idea of the Christian trinity. They are Unitarians and at the same time are Trinitarians. But the unity they believe in is the numerical unity, which does not negate numerousness from other sides. They say: There are three persons (the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost) (or say: the self, the knowledge, the life), yet they are one, like: A living learned man; he is one, yet he is three because there is man, life, and knowledge.

But the Qur'anic teaching rebuts this idea, because it affirms such a unity, which leaves no room for a supposition of any type of multitude, numerousness, or distinction either in His person or His attributes.

Whatever attribute is supposed for Him is exactly the other attribute, because there is no limit or boundary here. God's person is exactly His attribute; and each attribute supposed for Him is His other attribute. May He be exalted above what they associate with Him and Glory be to Him from what they ascribe to Him.

This is the reason that the verses that describe Him as the Subduer first ascribe to Him the attribute of Oneness and then mentions His subduing. It shows that His unity does not leave any room to anyone even to imagine His second who could be similar to Him in any way, not to speak of that second's actual existence. God says: ... *are sundry lords better or Allah the One, the Subduer? You do not worship besides Him but names which you have named, you and your fathers;* ... (12:39–40). In this speech, Joseph ascribes to God the unity, which has subdued every imaginary partner, and this subduing does leave nothing to any other supposed god except name. Also He says: ... *Or have they set up with Allah associates who have created creation like His, so that what is created became confused to them? Say: "Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Subduer"* (13:16); ... *To whom belongs the Kingdom this day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer* (40:16). It is because His unrestricted kingdom does not leave any other supposed owner without turning him and his possession into His hand as His possession. Also He says: ... *and there is no god but Allah, the One, the Subduer* (38:65); *If Allah had intended to take a son to Himself, He would surely have chosen those He pleases from what He has created. Glory*

be to Him: He is Allah, the One, the Subduer (39:4). Thus, you see that in all these verses, His Oneness precedes His attribute of subduing.

Narrations (On *Tawḥīd*)

(1) (al-Ṣadūq) narrates through his chain of narrators, from al-Miqdām b. Shurayḥ b. Hānī, from his father that he said, "Verily a Bedouin stood up on the day of the Camel to the Leader of the Faithful and said, 'O Leader of the Faithful! Do you say that God is one?'" (The narrator) said that the people bore down on him and said, "O Bedouin! Do you not see how disturbed the Leader of the Faithful is at present?" The Leader of the Faithful said, "Leave him, because what this Bedouin wants is exactly what we want from these people (our adversaries)."

Then he said, "O Bedouin! The statement that, God is One is of four kinds (that is, it can be interpreted in four ways): Two sides (meanings) of them are not applicable to God, the Mighty, the Great, and two sides are affirmed about Him. As for the two meaning which are not allowed to attach to Him: (One:) It is the word of a speaker, 'one', when he intends it as a number; so this is not allowed (in respect of God), because that which has no 'second' does not enter into the fold of numbers (that is, cannot be counted). Don't you see that He has declared them disbelievers who said that He was the third of the three? (Two:) It is the word of a speaker (for someone) that he is one of the people; he means a species from genes; so it is not allowed because it likens Him (to others), and our Lord is far greater and more sublime than it.

"And as for the two meanings which are affirmed about Him: (One:) It is the word of a speaker: He is One, there is nothing like unto Him; such is our Lord. (Two:) It is the word of a speaker: He is of one meaning, that is, He cannot be divided in existence, or in reason, or in imagination. Such is our Lord, the Mighty, the Great." (*al-Tawḥīd*; *al-Khiṣāl*)

Author's comment: He has also narrated it in *Ma'āni al-akhbār*, through another chain, from Abu al-Miqdām b. Shurayḥ b. Hānī, from his father from the Imam.

(2) ('Alī said:) "The foremost in religion is the knowledge of Him,

> the perfection of knowing Him is to testify Him, the perfection of testifying Him is to believe in His Oneness, the perfection of believing in His Oneness is to adhere to Him purely, and the perfection of adhering to Him purely is to deny Him attributes, because every attribute testifies that it is different from that to which it is attributed and everything to which something is attributed testifies that it is different from the attribute.
>
> "Thus whoever attaches attributes to God joins Him (to another thing) and who joins Him (to another thing) regards Him two; and who regards Him two recognizes parts for Him; and who recognizes parts for Him is ignorant of Him; and who is ignorant of Him pointed at Him; and who pointed at Him admitted limitations for Him; and who admitted limitations for Him numbered Him."[1]

Author's comment: It is a most amazing expression. The gist of the first paragraph is that cognition of God in its perfection ultimately leads to denying Him attributes. And the gist of the second paragraph (beginning with, "Thus whoever attaches attributes to God ...") is that affirmation of attributes entails affirmation of numerical unity that in its turn depends on putting limitations on Him, which is not allowed for God. The two premises lead to the conclusion that perfection of God's cognition entails denying numerical unity/oneness for Him, and seeking some other meaning for divine unity. And that is the theme of the Imam in this sermon.

As for the question of denying Him attributes, the Imam has explained it in his word: The foremost in religion is the knowledge of Him. Apparently, one, who does not know God in any way, is yet to enter into the fold of religion. That knowledge is sometimes accompanied by deeds and at other times is devoid of deeds. Obviously, if one had a knowledge, which was somewhat, related to deed and action that knowledge would settle in the psyche only when it was acted upon. Otherwise, the knowledge would go on losing its power if contrary actions were performed, until it would become futile, null and void. The Imam has explained the same principle somewhere else in the same book: Knowledge is joined with action, he who knows acts; knowledge calls action loudly, if it answers the

1 *Nahj al-balāghah*; part of Sermon 1. (Trans.)

call, (well and good); otherwise knowledge too departs.

The knowledge and cognition becomes complete when the knower holds truly to "the known", and manifests it in his interior and exterior, in his heart and limbs, by submitting to it in spirit and flesh. And it is the faith, which spreads to his inner and outer self. This reality is expressed in a nutshell in the sentence: the perfection of knowing Him is to testify Him.

Although this submission, which is called testifying Him, may take place with ascribing a partner to the Lord, as we see idol-worshipers submitting to God together with their other gods, yet obviously submission to a thing cannot be complete without turning away from other things. Thus submission to one of the gods means to turn away from other gods and in a way behaving arrogantly towards them. By the same standard, testifying to God and submission to Him cannot be complete without turning away from submission to the partners ascribed to Him and from the call to multitude of gods. This takes us to the sentence: the perfection of testifying Him is to believe in His Oneness.

Now, the belief in unity of God has different grades one over another; and it is not perfected until the One God is given His due right of exclusive divinity. It is not enough just to call Him One God, but every factor having any part in existence and perfection must be attributed to Him, e.g., creation, giving sustenance, raising to life, causing to die, and bestowal and withholding. Submission and worship must be reserved to Him, without showing humility to other than Him in any way; one should not hope except for His mercy, should not fear except His wrath, should not covet except what is with Him, and should not adhere except to His door. In other words, one must devote oneself solely to Him in knowledge and practice. This factor is described by ʿAlī in these words: the perfection of believing in His Oneness is to adhere to Him purely.

When man settles on throne of sincerity, and divine solicitude attaches him to the near friends of God, then appear before his insight the signs manifesting his inability to properly acquire His cognition or to ascribe to Him the attributes worthy of His Greatness and Majesty. He sees that whatever attributes he uses for God are merely the ideas, which he has perceived by looking at, created things and the happening that he has observed in transient creatures. These are limited and restricted forms, each repelling the others; they cannot be mixed and mingled. Look for

example at the meanings of existence, knowledge, power, life, sustenance, might, and affluence.

The limited meanings repel each other because clearly each meaning is devoid of the other meaning; for example, meaning of knowledge is devoid of that of power. When we imagine knowledge our attention is diverted from power, and we do not see the meaning of power in that of knowledge; and when we imagine the meaning of knowledge (which is one of the attributes) we are diverted from the meaning of His person, to Whom these attributes are attached.

Thus, these meanings, perceptions, and knowledge fall short of the ability to be applied properly to God, or to express exactly His splendor. A sincere servant, who intends to describe his Lord, inevitably feels the need to confess his shortcomings, which are not redeemable, his weakness that cannot be restored. Then he looks again to himself and negates what he had affirmed; and wanders in bewilderment from which he can't come out. This is the connotation of the words of ʿAlī: "and the perfection of His purity is to deny Him attributes, because every attribute testifies that it is different from that to which it is attributed, and everything to which it is attributed testifies that it is different from the attribute."

This explanation given by us of the first paragraph is supported by the beginning of the sermon where the Imam says: "... Whom the height of intellect cannot appreciate, and the diving of understanding cannot reach; He for Whose description no limit is laid down, no eulogy exists, no time is ordained and no duration is fixed", as is clear to an intelligent contemplator.

The next paragraph: "Thus whoever attaches attributes to God joins Him (to another thing) ..." This section analyses the implication of attaching attributes to God and in this way arrives at the aim that God is not subject to limitation or counting; while the first paragraph had reached through analysis of cognition to the denial of attributes.

"Thus whoever attaches attributes to God joins Him (to another thing)" because attribute and that to which it is attributed are two separate things; and whoever attaches them together, joins them; and whoever joins them recognizes them as two; and whoever recognizes God and His attributes as two, recognizes parts for Him, and whoever recognizes parts for Him is ignorant of Him, because in his imagination he points to Him; and whoever points to Him admits limitations for Him—because pointing

shows that the one who is pointed at is separate from the one who points; and it creates a distance between the two, as the pointing begins from one and ends at the other; and whoever puts limitation on Him, numbers Him. In other words, he believes in Him as a numerical one, because counting is concomitant with division and isolation: Far be it from His glory.

(3) ʿAlī says in another sermon:

> "Praise be to God for whom one condition does not precede another so that He may be the First before being the Last or He may be Manifest before being the Hidden. Everyone called one (alone) except Him is by virtue of being small (in number); and everyone enjoying honor other than Him is humble. Every powerful person other than Him is weak. Every master (owner) other than Him is slave (owned). Every knower other than Him is seeker of knowledge. Every powerful other than Him is sometimes imbued with power and sometimes with disability. Every listener other than Him is deaf to faint voices while loud voices make him deaf and distant voices also get away from him. Every onlooker other than Him is blind to hidden colors and delicate bodies. Every manifest thing other than Him is hidden, but every hidden thing other than Him is incapable of becoming manifest."[1]

Author's comment: It is based on the principle that God is not limited and all other things are limited. When these and similar attributes and ideas are subjected to limitation, they have some relationship with other things; and limitation causes them to be isolated from those other things, and be turned into opposite meaning.

Manifestation, when it is taken as limited, will be limited to a certain thing or a certain direction, and not to another thing or direction. Rather this manifest thing will turn into a hidden one when looked at in relation to that another thing or direction. When honor is subjected to limitation, will become null and void beyond that limit—will become humility. Power, when confined to a limit, will turn into disability beyond that limit. Manifestation is concealment beyond its location, and concealment is manifestation outside its context.

When ownership is restricted then the one who restricts shall be

1 *Nahj al-balāghah*, part of Sermon 64. (Trans.)

guardian and supervisor over this owner—in this way, both the owner and the thing he owns will be under ownership of someone else. Knowledge, when it is limited, does not belong to the knower, because a thing does not restrict itself—it has come to him by bestowal of someone else and his teaching. And so on.

The proof that the Imam has based his talk on the meaning of limit, may be seen in the sentences: "Every listener other than Him is deaf to faint voices" (to the end of the paragraph,) as all of it shows that all the created things are subject to limitation; and all is in the same context.

The sentence: "Everyone called one (alone) except Him is by virtue of being small (in number)," is the reason why we have quoted the whole paragraph. Manifestly it is based on the meaning of limit. The numerical oneness branches out from the limitedness of what is called one; and it entails division and multiplication. The more this division increases, the smaller and weaker that 'one' becomes—in comparison to the resulting multitude. Obviously, every numerical 'one' is small in comparison to the resulting multitude—even if in imagination only.

As for the 'one' which has no limit nor end, we cannot imagine any numerousness in it, because it does not accept any limit or distinction, and its being encompasses all its essence. As nothing of its essence is left out, there is nothing to add to it or to subtract from it—so it cannot increase nor decrease; what we imagine as that one's second, is exactly the same 'one.'

(4) 'Alī has also said: "All praise be to God Who gives proof of His existence through His creation, of His being eternal through the newness of His creation, and through their mutual similarities proves that nothing is similar to Him. Senses cannot touch Him, because of the difference between the Maker and the made, the Limiter, the limited, the Sustainer, and the sustained.

"He is One but not by being the first in counting; is Creator but not through movement or labour; is Hearer but not by means of any physical organ; is Looker but not by a stretching of eyelids; is Witness but not by nearness; is Distant but not by measurement of distance; is Manifest but not by seeing and is Hidden but not through a rarefied (body).

"He is Distinct from things because of their subjugation to Him and their turning to Him.

"He who describes Him puts limits on Him, he who puts limits on Him counts Him, and he who counts Him rejects His eternity."[1]

Author's comment: The beginning of this sermon indicates that all attributes and ideas found in transient creation, are limited affairs; they cannot take place until and unless there is a Limiter to fix their limits, a Maker to make them and a Sustainer to sustain them, and that Limiter, Maker and Sustainer is God. Obviously, limit is of His making, and as such it has come into being when He has made it; so it cannot cover its Maker. Far sublime is His Glory from these limits.

As such, whatever attributes are ascribed to Him are not subject to any limit—although our words are incapable of describing this idea properly. God, therefore, is One but not in the sense of number, because number and count leads to limitation. In the same way should be interpreted the further descriptions of His creation, His hearing, His seeing, His presence and so on.

It sprouts from it that His being distant from His creation does not mean separation and isolation. Far High is He from attachment and separation, incarnation and isolation. Rather it means that He subdues the creation and controls it, while the creatures are subjugated to Him and return to Him.

The clauses: "He who describes Him puts limits on Him, and he who puts limits on Him counts Him, and he who counts Him rejects His eternity", prove that affirmation of numerical unity entails rejection of His eternity. Eternity in its essence means that God is not finite in His person and attributes, nor is He limited in any way. When we think of Him with regard to His being unprecedented by any former thing, it is His eternity without beginning; and when we regard Him as being not followed by any later thing, it is His eternity without end; and when one is regarded eternal on both sides, it is perpetuity.

Some scholars think that God's eternity without beginning means that He precedes the created things, which He has created, and there had

1 *Nahj al-balaghah*, Sermon 152. *Azal* means eternity (without beginning), while *abad* denotes eternity (without end). Unfortunately, there are no words in English to express this difference in meaning, and one is constrained to use 'eternity' in both places. However, in the above sentence it denotes eternity without beginning. (Trans.)

passed untold time before it when there was no news of any creation or its trace. (In other words, His precedence is seen within the framework of time.) But it is a most repulsive mistake. What is time? It is but the amount of the movement of moving things. How can such a thing join God in His eternity?

(5) ʿAlī again says: "All praise be to God, Creator of the people, Who has spread the earth, has made streams to flow and vegetation to grow on high lands. His primality has no beginning, nor has His eternity any end. He is the First and from ever, and the everlasting without limit. Foreheads bow before Him and lips declare His Oneness. He determined the limits of things at the time of His creating them, keeping Himself away from any likeness.

"Imagination cannot surmise Him with limits and movements, limbs or senses. It cannot be said about Him: When? and no time duration can be attributed to Him by saying: till. He is Manifest, but it cannot be said: from what. He is Hidden but it cannot be said: in what. He is not a body that can die, nor is He veiled so as to be enclosed within. He is not near to things by way of touch, nor is He remote from them by way of separation.

"The gazing of people's eyes is not hidden from Him, nor the repetition of words, nor the glimpse of hillocks, nor the tread of a footstep in the dark night or in the deep gloom, where the shining moon casts its light and the effulgent sun comes in its wake, through its setting and appearing again and again with the rotation of time and periods, by the approach of the advancing night or the passing away of the running day.

"He precedes every extremity and limit, and every counting and number. He is far above what those whose regard is limited attribute to

Him, such as the qualities of measure, having extremities, living in houses, and dwelling in abodes, because limits are meant for creation and are attributable only to other than God.

"He did not create things from eternal matter, nor after ever existing examples. But He created whatever He created and then He fixed limits thereto, and He shaped whatever He shaped and gave

the best shape thereto."[1]

(6) Again he says:

"He who assigns to Him (different) conditions does not believe in His oneness, nor does he who likens Him (to something) grasp His reality, He who illustrates Him does not signify Him. He who points at Him and imagines Him does not mean Him. Everything that is known through itself has been created, and everything that exists by virtue of other things is the effect (of a cause). He works, but not with the help of instruments. He fixes measures, but not with the activity of thinking. He is rich, but not by acquisition.

"Times do not keep company with Him, and implements do not help Him. His being precedes times. His existence precedes non-existence, and His eternity precedes beginning. By His creating the sense it is known that He has no senses. By His creating contrariness in various matters it is known that He has no contrary; and by His creating similarity between things it is known that there is nothing similar to Him. He has made light the contrary of darkness, brightness that of gloom, dryness that of moisture, and heat that of cold. He produces affection among inimical things, fuses together diverse things, brings near remote things, and separates things, which are joined together.

"He is not confined by limits, nor counted by numbers. Material parts can surround things of their own kind, and organs can point out things similar to themselves. The word, 'since', disproves their eternity; the word, *qad* (that denotes nearness of time of occurrence), disproves their being from ever; and the word *lawlā* (if it were not) keeps them remote from perfection.

"Through them the Creator manifests Himself to the intelligence; and through them He is guarded from the sight of the eyes. Stillness and motion do not occur in Him: How can that thing occur in Him, which He Himself has made to occur? And how can a thing revert to Him, which He first created? And how can a thing appear in Him, which He first brought to appearance? Had it not been so, His Self would have become subject to

1 *Nahj al-balāghah*, part of Sermon 163. (Trans.)

> diversity, His Being would have become divisible (into parts), and His reality would have been prevented from being deemed Eternal. If there was a front to Him, there would have been a rear also for Him, and He would have needed completion when shortage befell Him. In that case signs of the created would appear in Him, and He would become a sign (leading to other objects) instead of signs leading to Him."[1]

Author's comment: The first parts aim at showing that God cannot admit limitation. We have briefly explained it earlier.

"He is not confined by limits, nor counted by numbers": It gives the sum total of the preceding paragraphs.

"Material parts can surround things of their own kind, and organs can point out things similar to themselves": It further elaborates immediately preceding result. The preceding clauses showed that the limits encompassing the created things are the handiwork of the Creator, and have occurred after Him as an action occurs after its doer. Obviously, such a thing cannot encompass the doer. But these clauses under discussion look at the same aspect from another angle. Quantification and limitation, which are affected by these organs and material parts, take place within the framework of the given species. For example, gram is a unit of weight, and it is used in weighing loads, not colors or sounds; time which is amount of motion is used for gauging movements; a man's social prestige and weight is measured by comparing him to that of another. In short, each of these limits gives its object a frame of its own kind. Now, every transient attribute, whatever it may be, is based on a measure and limit, and adheres to a term and end; this being the case, how can its limited meaning be applied to God Who is eternal, without beginning and without end, remaining for ever?

This is what the Imam means, and that is why it is followed by the clauses: "The word, 'since', disproves their eternity; the word, *qad* (that denotes nearness of time of occurrence), disproves their being from ever; and the word, *lawlā* (if it were not) keeps them remote from perfection." The words, since and *qad*, both indicate new occurrence in time; obviously their objects cannot be described as being eternal or without beginning. Likewise, the word, *lawlā*, points to shortcoming and defect, which has

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1 *Nahj al-balāgha*, part of Sermon 186. (Trans.)

kept it far from perfection.

"Through them the Creator manifests Himself to the intelligence; and through them He is guarded from the sight of the eyes": 'Through them' that is, through these things. Meaning: The things are the signs of God, the Creator; and signs show only that whose signs they are. They are like mirrors that show only His power and knowledge; through them He has shown Himself to intelligence; and also through them He prevents the eyes to see Him. The only way to see Him is through these signs—and these are limited and can cover only those things, which are limited like them. How can they encompass the Lord who encompasses everything?

For the same reason, eyes cannot see Him. Eyes are delicately made organs, which have their own limitations and can comprehend only those things, which are similarly limited. And far be it from the Glory of the Lord to be subject of limitation!

"Stillness and motion do not occur in Him ...": It reiterates the forgoing theme in a different way. These actions and occurrences, which are ultimately a combination of stillness and motion, are not applicable to Him; they do not return to Him, nor do they occur in Him. They are merely the effects of His influence on a thing. And man cannot influence himself, except through a sort of analysis that would divide his person somehow, like a man hitting his hand on his head, or a physician treating himself through his medicine, etc. This looks okay because of variation of aspects or imaginary separation of limbs. Otherwise it would have been impossible. For example, eye does not see itself, and fire does not burn itself; similarly no active agent shows its action except in other than itself, (save where compounding or analysis is entailed). This is the connotation of the Imam's words: "Had it not been so, His Self would have become subject to diversity, His Being would have become divisible (into parts), and His reality would have been prevented from being deemed Eternal."

"In that case signs of the created would appear in Him, and He would become a sign (leading to other objects) instead of signs leading to Him": If He were subject to limits and dimension, He would be afflicted with shortage and defect, in need of something to remove that shortfall. But defect and shortage are signs of 'made' objects, and are proofs of transience; and in that case He would carry in Himself signs of being created; Glorified and High be He from such aspects! Such an idea would place Him side

by side with other made things, which through their defects, limitations and transience, point to an Eternal Being Who is free from all defects and limitations—and He is God, Whom hands of limitation and dimension cannot reach.

The Imam has shown here that only a transient and made thing leads to its Eternal Maker. In other contexts, the same Imam as well as all other Imams of Ahl al-Bayt have asserted that God is known by Himself while other things are known through Him; that He is the Guide to His Own Self as well as to His created things. Apparently, these two stands seem contrary to each other. But it is not so, because this knowledge is different from that, and this guidance is dissimilar to that. I hope that God will help me to explain it fully in a related discourse in some later study—God Willing!

(7) (al-Ṣadūq) narrates through his chain from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said, "While the Leader of the Faithful was delivering a sermon on the pulpit of Kūfah, a man named Dhi'lib stood up—and he had a fluent tongue, eloquent speech and a brave heart—and said, 'O Leader of the Faithful! Have you seen your Lord?' He said, 'Woe unto thee, O Dhi'lib! I am not the one to worship Whom I have not seen.' (Dhi'lib) said, 'O Leader of the Faithful! How did you see Him?' He said, 'O Dhi'lib! Eyes have not seen Him through the eyesight; but hearts perceive Him through the realities of belief. Woe unto thee, O Dhi'lib! Verily my Lord is the most kind,[1] and He is not described in terms of kindness; the most exalted, but is not described in terms of exaltedness; the greatest, but not described in terms of greatness; the most grand, but not described in terms of thickness. He is before every thing, it is not said that anything is before Him; He is after everything, it is not said that for Him there is an after. He wished (creation of) thing but not through endeavour; He is successful, not through treachery. He is in the things, but not intermingled with them, or separate from them. He is Manifest but not in physical sense, is Evident but not through sighting with eyes. He is separate but not because of distance, is near but not by proximity. He is delicate,

1 Its literal translation will be, "kind of the kindness"; the same is the case with the following three clauses. (Trans.)

but not through embodiment, existing, not after non-existence. He is the Doer, but not under compulsion, the Ordainer, but not with movement, the Preceptor, not with any worry; He is the Hearer, not with an organ, the Seer, not with a body part. Places do not encompass Him, and times do not accompany Him and attributes do not limit Him. His Being preceded times, and His existence (preceded) non-existence, and His eternity (preceded) the beginning. By His creating the senses it was known that He has no senses, and by His making the substances it was recognized that He has no substance; and by His creating the contraries in various matters it is known that He has no contrary, and by the similarity between things it is known that there is nothing similar to Him. He has made light contrary of darkness, dryness that of moisture, and cold that of heat. He produces affinity between inimical things (and) separates things, which are joined together. (These things) by their separation lead to their separator, and by their joining point to their joiner; and this is the word of God, the Mighty, the Great: And of every thing We have created pairs that you may be mindful (51:49). In this way He separated them between before and after, in order that it may be known that for Him there is no before or after; they prove through their natures that their Creator has no nature; their being bound by time makes it known that He Who thus binds them is not bound by time. He veils some of them from others, that it may be understood that there is no veil between Him and His creation—except the creation itself. He was the Sustainer when there was no sustained, the God when there was no worshipper, the Knower when there was no known, and the Hearer when there was nothing to be heard. Then he recited saying:

" 'And my Master was always well known by praise,
And my Master was always described for magnanimity; And He was when there was no light to illuminate,
Nor was darkness keeping to horizons; So our Master is unlike the whole creation,
And unlike all that could be imagined by minds.'"[1]

1 al-Ṣadūq, *al-Tawḥīd*; some pieces of this sermon are found also in *Nahj al-balāghah*, Sermons 179 and 186. (Trans.)

Author's comment: As you see, the speech of the Imam explains the theme of the uniqueness of God's person in all its manifestations; and that His Person is neither finite nor limited. No self stands opposite His Self, otherwise it would have threatened Him through limitation and subdued Him through determination. He encompasses everything, and controls every affair. No attribute is ascribed to Him, which is separate from His person; otherwise it would negate His eternity and go against His limitlessness.

His attribute of perfection is not bound with any limit, which would push away other thing or be pushed away by it. For example, our knowledge is other than our power because both are separate from each other in meaning as well as in external existence; but so far as God's person is concerned, the two attributes are not separate from one another; this attribute is exactly that, and is not distinguishable from His many other attributes; His one name denotes all His beautiful names.

Going one step further, we find another meaning—finer and deeper than above: These meanings and ideas are like weights and measures for intelligence. The intelligence uses them to weigh and measure external existence, the actual being. As such these meanings and ideas are subject to limits, and boundaries. They cannot be devoid of this aspect, even if we join them together and even if they were to support one another; they cannot weigh or measure except the things, which are subject to limits and boundaries like them. Now, if we suppose something unlimited, and then try to gauge it with these limited weights and measures, we cannot get except a limited thing and it will not be the One Who is above limits and boundaries; and the more we try to get Him in this way, the higher and remoter He will go.

Let us look at the meaning of knowledge: It is a meaning we have taken from an attribute which is limited in existence and which we deem as perfection for the knower. This theme is bounded in such a way that it cannot accommodate power and life, for example. Sometimes we may use this word for God and try to overcome its limitedness by adding to it some phrases, e.g. "knowledge unlike other knowledge"; now it would release it from some limitations, yet it cannot go beyond its basic meaning and will not cover other attributes of perfection. (Every meaning has a limit that it cannot go beyond.) Just adding one theme to another does not lead to

negation of the particular theme, as it is clear.

This leaves man bewildered when he tries to describe God according to his own wisdom and understanding. It is this theme that is inferred from his clause, "and attributes do not limit Him", and from another clause in the first sermon quoted earlier, "and the perfection of adhering to Him purely is to deny Him attributes", and again in the same sermon (not quoted here): "He for Whose description no limit has been laid down, and no eulogy exists." Here you see that he asserts attribute at the same time when he negates it or negates its limit; and it is understood that its assertion cannot be free from limit; thus negating its limit is tantamount to rejecting it after admitting it. It means that asserting for Him an attribute of perfection does not negate other attributes. In this way His attributes combine with one another and then become one with His Self and there is no limit; then it does not negate what is beyond these attribute (that which we do not understand that we may narrate, nor do we perceive that could be attached to Him). Understand it.

Had it not been that meanings fall down when they reach near His Majesty and Greatness (in the sense described above), it would have been possible for the reason to encompass Him with all the general and vague ideas which surround Him, like His description that He is a person not like persons, He has knowledge unlike knowledge, power not like others' power, and life different from all types of life. This manner of description does not leave anything without counting and encompassing it in general. The question is: Is it possible for anything to encompass Him? Or is it that one cannot comprehend Him in detail, but there is no difficulty in encompassing Him in a general way? But God has said: ... *while they do not comprehend Him in knowledge* (20:110); ... *now surely He encompasses all things,* (41:54). So, nothing encompasses God from any direction in any manner of encompassing; and His Glorified Self does not accept any detail or generality, so that there could be one verdict for His detail and another for His generality. Understand it.

(8) ʿAlī says in another sermon: "His proof is His signs, and His existence is His affirmation; and His cognition is His Oneness, and His Oneness is to distinguish Him from His creation; and the verdict of distinction is the separation of attribute, not separation of isolation. Verily He is the Sustainer (and) Creator, not

sustained (or) created; anything imagined, He is opposite to it. (Thereafter he, a.s. said): He is not a god who is recognized by his self; He guides the proof to lead to Him, and leads the cognition to Himself."[1]

Author's comment: Meditation on foregoing statement makes it clear that this sermon aims at showing that the divine unity is an oneness unrelated to number. See how clearly he says that His cognition is His oneness; in other words, affirmation of His existence is exactly the affirmation of His oneness. Had this oneness been of number, it would have been separate from His Self, and the Self, per se, would not have sufficed for oneness except through an external factor separate from affirmation of the Self.

It is an amazing logic and a most profound description of the divine unity; if we were to go into its proper explanation, it would require a deep and extensive discourse beyond the scope of this book. A finest point included therein is his clause: "His existence is His affirmation"; the Imam means that His proof is His actual existence, that is, mind does not grasp Him and reason does not encompass Him.

"Anything imagined, He is opposite to it": The Imam does not mean that He is opposite of the imagined form, because everything found outside imagination shares this quality. The actual meaning is that God is opposite to what the mind imagines about Him, whatever it may be; as such an imagined form cannot encompass Him. However, you should not forget that He is much beyond even this imagination, that is, the imagination that He is opposite to every imagination.

"He is not a god who is recognized by his self": God's Majesty is so great that cognition cannot reach Him and He subdues all understanding and perception. Everyone whom we recognize by his own self, his self is other than ours and his cognition is likewise separate from ours, and that is how our cognition is attached to him. But God encompasses and supervises our cognition and us. There is no safety-hold to which our cognition or we might cling to avoid His all-encompassing power and to adhere to it in isolation.

The Imam has explained this stage in his words: "He guides the proof to lead to Him, and leads the cognition to Himself." It means that God is

1 al-Ṭabrisī, *al-Iḥtijāj*. (Auth.)

the Guide Who leads the proof to guide to Him, and leads the cognition to have a sort of relation to Him; it is because He encompasses everything and has power and authority over everything. That being the case, how can anything find a way to His Self or encompass Him, while God encompasses it and controls its guidance to Himself?

(9) (al-Ṣadūq) narrates from ʿUmar b. ʿAlī from ʿAlī that he said, "The Messenger of God has said, 'The Unity (of God), its exterior is in its interior, and its interior is in its exterior; its exterior is attributed (which) is not seen and its interior is existant (which) is not hidden. He is sought in every place while no place is devoid of Him even for one moment; (He is) present, without any limit, absent (but) not lost.'" (*Maʾāni al-akhbār*)

Author's comment: This speech too aims at describing God's non-numerical oneness; it is based on the fact that God is not limited by any limit. This limitlessness shows that His unity's exterior is not separate from its interior, and vice versa. It is because exterior and interior become separated and isolated from one another when there is a limit and boundary between them, but when that boundary is removed, both mingle together and become one.

Likewise, the attributed exterior is encompassed and the extant interior is hidden and veiled when they are fettered with a limit, and cannot trespass that boundary. Likewise, a thing present is limited and its presence is perceived by those who are near it, while the absent is unperceived and lost because of its limitedness. Otherwise, the present with all its being would not have gathered near those who are in its proximity, and the absent would not have been hidden from those who are far away. And it is clear.

A Historical Discourse

The belief that there is a Creator for the universe, and that He is One, is among the earliest ideas prevalent among the thinkers of this species, to which it is guided by its natural instincts. If we ponder deeply on even the idol worship, which is based on polytheism, we shall find that it is founded on the Oneness of the Creator, and the idols are taken merely as interceders near Him (*We do not worship them save that they may make us nearer to Allah,* 39:3), although with passage of time it deviated from its original path, and finally they treated those idols as independent deities

besides God.

The human nature, which calls to the Unity of God, was inviting human beings to the One God Who is not bound with any limit in His Greatness and Majesty, neither in Person nor in attribute (as we have explained earlier with the help of the Mighty Book); yet man in his life is intimately familiar with units in numbers; and the people of religion were entangled with idol-worshipers and dualists, etc. to refute plurality of gods, on the other hand. Both these factors stamped the idea of oneness of number on the minds, so much so that the above mentioned natural dictate was almost forgotten.

That was the reason that the ancient philosophers of Egypt, Greece, Alexandria, as well as those who came after them, affirm divine unity in terms of oneness in number; even such a genius as Avicenna has clearly affirmed it in his *Kitāb al-Shifā'*. And the same path was trodden by later ones up to about the year 1000 of *hijrah*.

As for the scholars of scholastic theology, their arguments too for the Unity do not prove other than the oneness in number, although they have based their talk on the Qur'anic general declarations. So, this is what is understood from the scholars' writings on this subject.

In fact, what the Qur'an has explained concerning the meaning of the divine unity was the first and the foremost step for teaching this reality of cognition. Unfortunately, the Companions, their disciples, and their pupils who dealt with the Qur'anic explanation and who pursued the knowledge of the Book, left this noble topic in abeyance. Look into the collections of traditions, and the book of exegesis narrated on their authority; you will not find in all that multitude any trace of this reality—neither with an explanatory description nor in a logical manner.

We did not find in all our searching anything which could uncover its veil, except what has come into the speeches of the Imam ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib exclusively. It is his speech that has opened its door and raised its curtain, showing the straightest path and the clearest way of proofs. Thereafter we come straight to the Muslim philosophers who appeared after the year one thousand of *hijrah*, and they have clearly said that they have learned it from the Imam's speeches.

That is the reason that we had no alternative to quoting only from his pure speeches in the preceding section of Traditions, because nowhere

else can we find description of this topic and its explanation with logical arguments—May God's peace be on him.

Also because of the same reason, we have not included an independent philosophical discussion of this subject. The fact is that the proofs presented in their books are composed of the same premises, which have been explained in the Imam's speeches; and all are based on the theme of the oneness of His Person.[1]

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1 If one looks with critical eyes and meditates deeply, one cannot fail to be astonished by the blunder committed by some scholars who have claimed that these Sermons of ʿAlī, which are included in *Nahj al-balāghah*, are spurious and not genuine; some have said that they were forged by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (may God have mercy on him!). Comments on some aspects of this mistake have been given somewhere earlier.

Would that I knew, how could forgery and unauthorized insertion cover such a complicated and fine academic subject which had for long centuries remained beyond the grasp of scholars even when the Imam had opened its door and raised its curtain—until the developing intellect had trodden on this path for one thousand years; and which had remained beyond the understanding of the Companions and their disciples.

The claim of these proponents of forgery loudly speaks that they had thought that the Qur'anic realities and the high academic principles were only some banal and vulgar ideas, and they are only distinguished by literary language and erudite expression. (Auth.)

Verses 87–89

These three verses together with the following ones (up to the verse 108) give details of various commandments related to branches of religion. This whole group is inserted between the verses describing the story of the Messiah and the Christians. These verses consist of various groups laying down diverse orders, each being independent and complete in its theme. As such, it is difficult to decide whether a given group was revealed separately or had accompanied other verses, because context supports neither alternative. As for the traditions showing reasons of revelation, important ones shall be quoted under Traditions.

The above comment is applicable to these three verses too, be- cause the third one is independent in its theme, and the first one too is independent; although they are not devoid of a sort of affinity, because one type of vain oath may be related to forbidding oneself the good things which have been made lawful by God. Perhaps this was the reason why some exegetes have narrated that all verses were revealed about vain oaths.

This applies to the first verse *vis-à-vis* the third. As for the second, it in a way completes the first verse, as evidenced by some factors in it; that is, the command to: fear God in Whom you believe, and the conjunction: and at its beginning, as well as the order to "eat of the lawful things," forbidding which has been prohibited in the first one. In this way the two verses are harmonized, give the same order and have the same context.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُحَرِّمُوا طَيِّبَاتِ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

> (5:87) O you who believe! Do not forbid (yourselves) the good thing which Allah has made lawful for you and do not exceed the limits; surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits.

al-Rāghib says in *al-Mufradāt*: "al-Ḥarām denotes the forbidden thing, be it by divine subjugation or forcible obstruction; whether this prohibition is by reason or *sharī'ah* or by one whose orders are followed."

Again he says: "*al-Ḥill* basically means to untie a knot; the verse: *and loose the knot from my tongue* (20:27), is used in this meaning; and *ḥalaltu* means: 'I descended'; this is based on the fact that one unties one's luggage on dismounting, then it was used for dismounting and disembarkation in general, and in this sense they say: 'He disembarked'; someone made him disembark, that is, hosted him. God says: *or it will alight close by their abodes* (13:31); *and made their people to alight into the abode of perdition* (14:28). When time to repay a loan comes, they say, the loan has arrived; *al-ḥillah* is used for the people who alight; the same is the meaning of *ḥayy ḥallāl*; *al-maḥillah* is the place of disembarking; *ḥalla ḥillan* means it is lawful—this metaphorical expression is derived from 'untying the knot.' God says: *And eat of the lawful and good* (*things*) *that Allah has given you*; also He says: *This is lawful and this is unlawful* (16:116)."

Apparently the contraposition between *ḥill* (lawfulness) and *ḥurmah* (unlawfulness), and opposition between *ḥill* (area beyond a sanctuary) and *ḥaram* (sanctuary) or *iḥrām* (the robe worn when entering *ḥaram*) is based on imaginary tying of knot when forbidding something, that is, unlawfulness; then it (*ḥurmah*) is put opposite of *ḥill* (which is metaphorically used for lawfulness). The two words, *ḥill*, and *ḥurmah* were generally used for lawfulness and unlawfulness, respectively, even before Islam; it is not that *sharī'ah* or its followers have coined them.

The verse (under discussion) prohibits to the believers forbidding themselves what God has made lawful for them. This forbidding what has been made lawful by God can be done either by laying down a legislation contrary to divine legislation, or by forbidding others or abstention, that is, one leaves out a lawful thing by abstaining from it or prohibiting it to oneself or others. All this behavior is tantamount to forbidding what God has made lawful, and it is equal to fighting God in His Power; this transgression against Him is contrary to the belief in God and in His communication. That is why the verse begins with the phrase: "O you who believe!" it implies that you are believers in God and have submitted to His commandments; therefore you should not forbid to yourself what God has made lawful. This explanation is further supported by the end clause of the next verse: *and fear Allah in Whom you believe*.

... the good things which God has made lawful for you: The addition of the word, "good",—although the sentence would be complete even

without it—aims at completing the cause of prohibition: If the believers forbid themselves the things which God has made lawful for them, then it is not only that they commit transgression against God in His authority and defy the demands of their belief in, and submission to, God, but also go against the law of nature, which takes these lawful things as good without reservation. God has pointed to it where He says about His Prophet and the *sharī'ah* which he has brought: *Those who follow the Messenger Prophet, the ummī, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel,* (*who*) *enjoins them good and forbids them evil, and makes lawful to them the good things and makes unlawful to them impure things, and removes from them their burden and the shackles which were upon them; so* (*as for*) *those who believe in him and honor him and help him, and follow the light which has been sent down with him, these it is that are the successful* (7:157).

The above description supports the following:

First: Forbidding the good things that God has made lawful means abstaining, and making others desist, from lawful things.

Second: Lawful, as opposite of unlawful, includes the permissible and the commendable, even the obligatory things.

Third: Addition of "the good things" to that "which God has made lawful for you" aims at further elaboration of the same idea.

Fourth: Exceeding the limits (in "do not exceed the limits") means transgression against God in His legislative authority; or overstepping the limits laid down by God by revolting against His obedience, refusing to submit to Him, and forbidding what He has made lawful. As God says, inter alia, describing the laws of divorce: *These are the limits of Allah, so do not exceed them, and whoever exceeds the limits of Allah then these it is that are the unjust* (2:229). Likewise He says at the end of the verses of inheritance: *These are Allah's limits; and whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, He will cause him to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them; and this is the great achievement. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger and transgresses His limits, He will cause him to enter Fire to abide in it, and he shall have an abasing chastisement* (4:13–14).

As you see, the verses count uprightness and adherence to the *sharī'ah* in obedience to God and His Messenger as praiseworthy; and stepping out of obedience and submission to Him, and transgression and exceeding the limits of God as condemnable act that makes one liable to chastisement.

In short, the verse prohibits one from forbidding oneself what God has made lawful, by keeping away from it and avoiding it, because it goes contrary to the belief in God and His signs. Also it opposes the fact of their being lawful and good, and of their being free of impurity; otherwise, why should one abstain from them? It is nothing but exceeding the limits, and God does not love those who exceed the limits.

... and do not exceed the limits; surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits: You have seen and the context apparently shows that exceeding the limits connotes the self-imposed abstaining of the preceding sentence. As such the prohibition: "do not exceed the limits," aims at emphasizing the one in: do not forbid (yourselves).

Some people have said: Exceeding the limits means overstepping the line of moderation regarding the lawful things, by throwing oneself down to enjoying them without restraint, contrary to discarding them abstemiously. So, the verse would mean: Do not forbid yourselves the good and tasteful things that God has made lawful for you. Do not intentionally avoid enjoying them abstemiously believing that it would bring you nearer to God. And do not exceed the limits by transgressing the line of moderation, going to extravagance and excess which would be harmful for your bodies or souls.

Or, exceeding the limits may mean overstepping the good and lawful things, indulging in bad and unlawful things. Then the connotation will be as follows: Do not avoid lawful thing and do not use unlawful things. In other words, do not forbid yourselves what God has made lawful for you and do not indulge in what God has forbidden you.

Although these two meanings are correct in themselves and the Qur'an clearly supports both themes, but neither fits the verse under discussion as its context and that of the following verse shows. Obviously, not every correct theme can be applied to every word without looking at its context and position.

وَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَنْتُمْ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

(5:88) And eat of the lawful and good (things) that Allah has given you, and fear Allah in Whom you believe.

The conjunction, "And", joins the imperative: "eat", with the

prohibition: do not forbid. As such, this verse apparently repeats and emphasizes the connotation of the preceding one. This is further supported by its opening phrase, "the lawful and good (things)" which stands parallel to the phrase in the preceding verse: the good things which Allah has made lawful for you, and the preceding verse's clause: *O you who believe!* as explained earlier.

Accordingly, the word: 'eat', coming after the prohibition: do not forbid, implies permission. Allowing one to eat in particular after the overall prohibition of forbidding is merely a verbal particularization, and the word: 'eat', implies unrestricted use of good bounties bestowed by God. Also, the word may mean only partaking of food or all aspects of usufruct and disposal. It has been repeatedly described that use of the word, eating, for general management and disposal is very common and widespread in literature.

Alternatively, the word 'eat' could have possibly been used here in its literal sense. Thus the two verses were revealed when some believers had forbidden themselves the good and tasty food, and the verses were sent down to stop them from it. The first verse is comprehensive and includes eating as well as other modes of management, and it covers things which are lawful to eat and lawful to use otherwise.

The clause: "that God has given you", is object of the verb: 'eat'; and the words: "the lawful and good (things)", are its circumstantial phrases—in this way, both verses do conform to each other.

Some others have said that, the words: "the lawful and good (things)," are the object of the verb: 'eat'; and the clause: "that God has given you," is attached to that verb; alternatively this clause might be a circumstantial phrase connected with the words: "the lawful and good (things)", and has preceded the connecting clause (the lawful) because it is a common noun; as a second alternative, the words: "the lawful and good (things)," might be adjectives to an omitted verbal noun, sustenance: *And eat of the lawful and good sustenance* ... There may also be some other interpretations.

Some people believe that sustenance includes lawful and unlawful both, and have argued for it by the adjective: "lawful", attached to it here. Reply: The "lawful and good" is not a circumspection condition for keeping out unlawful and bad sustenance; it is rather an explanatory condition and has the same connotation as the word explained—in this case,

sustenance. The reason why it has been added here is that its being lawful and good does not leave any excuse for anyone for avoiding and keeping aloof from it, as explained earlier. We have elaborated the meaning of sustenance under the verse 27 of the chapter of "The House of 'Imrān", in the third volume of this book.[1]

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَٰكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا عَقَّدْتُمُ الْأَيْمَانَ ۖ فَكَفَّارَتُهُ إِطْعَامُ عَشَرَةِ مَسَاكِينَ مِنْ أَوْسَطِ مَا تُطْعِمُونَ أَهْلِيكُمْ أَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ أَوْ تَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ ۖ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ كَفَّارَةُ أَيْمَانِكُمْ إِذَا حَلَفْتُمْ ۚ وَاحْفَظُوا أَيْمَانَكُمْ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

(5:89) Allah does not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He calls you to account for the making of deliberate oaths; so its expiation is the feeding of ten poor men out of the average (food) you feed your families with, or their clothing, or the freeing of a neck; but whosoever cannot find (means) then fasting for three days; this is the expiation of your oaths when you swear. And guard your oaths. Thus does Allah make clear to you His signs, that you may be grateful.

al-Laghw (inconsequential action); *al-aymān* is plural of *al-yamīn* (vow, oath). al-Rāghib says:

> "*al-Yamīn* in context of oath is an allusion to the (right) hand, keeping in view what the parties of treaty or agreement do (that they shake their right hands at the conclusion of the agreement). God says: *Or have you received from Us an agreement confirmed by an oath extending to the Day of Resurrection* ... (68:39); *And they swear by Allah with the strongest of their oaths,* ... (6:109); *Allah does not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths*, ... (5:89)."

al-Ta'qīd puts emphasis on *al-'aqd* (to tie); it is also recited without intensified pronunciation; "in your oath" is related to "does not call you to account", or to "what is vain", and this is nearer.

The clause, "what is vain in your oath," has been placed face to face

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol.5. (Trans.)

with, "the making of deliberate oaths"; it shows that the vain oath is the one regarding which the maker of oath is not serious, his heart is not in it, he merely uses the formula of oath by force of habit, as they generally say—and particularly in trade dealings—'No, by God!' 'Certainly by God!' It is a far cry from serious deliberation when one declares on oath that: 'By God! I'll most certainly do it', or 'By God! I'll most certainly not do it.'

This is what appears from the verse. But the *sharī'ah* also counts it as vain oaths if someone says: "By God! I'll do this unlawful deed"; or, "By God! I'll not do that obligatory deed"; it is because the Supreme Legislator has counted it as vain oath when it is used for something that has no preference in *sharī'ah*. This rule is added to the above Qur'anic one by the *sunnah*; and it is not necessary that the Qur'an should speak about everything that is affirmed by the *sunnah* particularly.

As for the clause: "but He calls you to account for the making of deliberate oaths," it includes only that oath which is endorsed by the *sharī'ah*, as it says at the end: And guard your oaths. Inevitably it refers to such oaths, and obviously the order to guard your oaths cannot point to that oath which God has declared vain. In short, a vain oath is that one which is not taken with deliberation; and the one made seriously is endorsed by *sharī'ah*.

... so its expiation is the feeding of ten poor men ... or the freeing of a neck: *al-Kufr* (to cover, to hide); *al-kaffārah* (an action which somehow hides or covers the evil of disobedience). God says: ... *We will expiate from you your* (*small*) *sins* ... (4:31). al-Rāghib says:

> "*al-Kaffārah* is that which covers the sin; and from it is the *kaffārah* (expiation) of oath."

The words: "so its expiation", have branched out from the description of oath, keeping in view some omitted but understood words; for example: Then if you break your oath, so its expiation ... It is because the word: "expiation", points to a disobedience which demands expiation; and that disobedience cannot be the oath itself, otherwise the end section of the verse would not have said: guard your oaths, because there is no sense in guarding an act of disobedience. Obviously, expiation is related to the breaking of oath, not the oath itself.

It also shows that the calling to account mentioned in the sentence: but He calls you to account for the making of deliberate oaths, is related to the breaking of, not the making of the oath. This calling to accounts is

related to oaths because it points to its breaking. The word, its expiation, branches from its breaking because the sentence, He calls you to account for the making of deliberate oaths, points to it. Similar explanation applies to the sentence: this is the expiation of your oaths when you swear, that is, when you swear and break it.

The clauses: "the feeding of ten poor men out of the average (food) you feed your families with, or their clothing, or the freeing of a neck", mention three items of expiation, any one of which may be chosen by the person concerned—because of the conjunction, 'or'; that is, all three are not to be joined together.

The clause: but whoever cannot find (means) then fasting for three days, prove that the above three items are matters of choice, without looking at their sequence. Otherwise, the clause: but whoever cannot find ..., would be meaningless, as in case of sequential expiation, it should have been, "or fasting for three days."

The verse contains many legislative details, for which reference should be made to Jurisprudence.

... this is the expiation of your oaths when you swear: As mentioned earlier, it means: when you swear and break it.

The demonstrative pronouns, *dhālika* (this is) and *kadhālika* (thus) are of second person singular, while the pronouns that follow them in: "your oaths", and, clear to you, are second person plural. In a way, the speech turns from the Prophet to the believers. Probably, it is because the divine elaboration reaches the people through the Prophet, as God has said: *... and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect* (16:44).

Thus does Allah make clear to you His signs, that you may be grateful: He makes clear to you, through His Prophet, His commandments, so that you may express your gratitude to Him by learning those commandments and acting on them.

Examining Narrations

(1) al-Qummī narrates under the verse: *O you who believe! Do not forbid (yourselves) the good things which Allah has made lawful for you*. Narrated to me my father, from Ibn Abī 'Umayr, from some of his men, from Abū 'Abdillāh, that he said, "This verse

was revealed about the Leader of the Faithful, Bilāl and ʿUthmān b. Maẓ'ūn. As for the Leader of the faithful, he had sworn that he would never sleep at night; and as for Bilāl, he had sworn that he would never eat during daytime (that is, would always keep fast); and as for ʿUthmān b. Maẓ'ūn, he had sworn that he would never indulge in sexual relation.

"Then ʿUthmān's wife came to ʿĀishah—and she was a beautiful woman. ʿĀishah said to her, 'Why do I see you without make-up?' She said, 'For whom should I make myself up? By God! My husband has not come near me since a long time, because he has become a monastic, wears course clothes, and has become an ascetic.'

"When the Messenger of God, entered (the house) ʿĀishah informed him of it. So, he came out, and call was given for congregational prayer. People assembled and (the Prophet) ascended the pulpit. He thanked God and praised Him; then said, 'What has happened to (some) people that they have forbidden themselves good things? Well, surely I sleep at night, and establish sexual relation and eat during day time; so whoever dislikes my *sunnah*, he is not from me.'

"Then people stood up and said, 'But O Messenger of God! We have sworn to it. Then God revealed to him: *Allah does not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He calls you to account for the making of deliberate oaths; so its expiation is this is the expiation of your oaths when you swear."* (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: It is not clear how the sentences: *Allah does not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths, but He calls you to account for the making of deliberate oaths*, could refer to their oaths; and some explanation of it has been given earlier. al-Ṭabrisī has narrated the story in *Majma' al-bayān* from Abū ʿAbdillāh and that narrative does not have the last paragraph; so meditate over it.

(2) Imam al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī (peace be on both) said to Mu'āwiyah and his companions *inter alia*, in a *ḥadīth*:

"I adjure you by God, do you know that ʿAlī was the first among the companions of the Messenger of God, to forbid the desires to himself; then God revealed: *O you who believe! Do not forbid*

(yourselves) the good things which Allah has made lawful for you. (*al-Iḥtijāj*)

(al-Ṭabrisī) writes under the above-mentioned verse: The exegetes have said, "The Messenger of God, sat one day and reminded the people and described the resurrection. The people were overwhelmed and cried; and ten companions gathered in the house of ʿUthmān b. Maẓ'ūn al-Jumaḥī, and they were: ʿAlī, Abū Bakr, ʿAbdullāh b. Mas'ūd, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, Sālim mawlā Abū Ḥudhayfah, ʿAbdullāh b. ʿUmar, al-Miqdād b. al-Aswad al-Kindī, Salmān al-Fārisī and Mu'qil b. Muqrin. They agreed among themselves that they would fast in the day and stand (for worship) in the night, would not sleep on bedding; would not partake of meat or fat, nor would go near women or perfume. (They decided) to wear coarse fabrics, discard the world and roam into the earth; some of them even intended to cut off their genitals.

"This news reached the Messenger of God. He went to the house of ʿUthmān (b. Maẓ'ūn) but did not find him there. So he said to his wife—her name was Ḥawlā' and she was a perfume vendor—'Is it true what I have been informed about your husband and his companions?' She did not like to tell lie to the Messenger of God nor did she like to speak against her husband; so she said, 'O Messenger of God! If ʿUthmān has told you so then he has told you the truth.' So the Messenger of God returned. When ʿUthmān entered (his house) she informed him about it. So, he and his companions came to the Messenger of God; and the Messenger of God said to them, 'Have not I been informed that you have agreed on such and such?' They said, 'Certainly, O Messenger of God! And we did not intend except good.' The Messenger of God said, "I have not been ordered this. Then he said, 'Surely your souls have rights on you; so keep fast and eat, stand (at nights) and sleep. Certainly, I stand (at nights) and sleep, and keep fast and eat, and I partake of meat and fat, and I go to women; and whoever dislikes my *sunnah*, is not from me.'

"Then he gathered the people and spoke to them; and said, 'What has happened to some people that they have forbidden themselves women, food and perfume, as well as sleep and desirable things

> of the world? Well, certainly I have not ordered you to become monks, because it is not in my religion to abstain from meat or women, nor (to live in) hermitages; and surely the wandering of my *ummah* is fast, and their monasticism is jihād. Worship God and do not associate anything with Him; perform *ḥajj* and *'umrah*, establish prayer, pay *zakāt* and keep fast of Ramaḍān; and remain straight, it will remain right for you. Those who were before you fell in perdition only because of zealotry. They put heavy burdens on themselves, so God intensified their load. So, these are their remnants in hermitages and monasteries. Then God revealed this verse.'" (*Majma' al-bayān*)

Author's comment: It appears by referring to the traditions that this narrative is a synopsis of traditions on this topic; there are a lot of such traditions, and al-Ṭabrisī has written it here after combining them together and abridging them into one tradition.

As for those numerous narrations, none of them mentions names of those companions together. The most comprehensive of them says, 'Uthmān b. Maẓ'ūn and his companions; some others say, a group of the companions of the Prophet; still others say, some people among the companions of the Prophet.[1] Likewise, the different sentences of the Prophet's talk and his detailed sermon are found scattered in various traditions. In the same way, the narratives do not say clearly that each of those companions had intended to avoid all those good things. Rather some traditions clearly show that various companions had wanted to leave out various things. al-Bukhārī and Muslim narrate from 'Āishah that some companions had asked the wives of the Prophet about his life in secret. Then some of them said: "I'll not eat meat"; some said: "I'll not go to women"; and some others said: "I'll not sleep in bedding." This news reached the Prophet, so he said, "What is the matter with the people, that some of them say this and this? But as for me, I keep fast and eat, sleep and stand (in prayer), and eat meat and go to the women; so whoever dislikes my *sunnah* is not from me."

Probably, when al-Ṭabrisī says that "they agreed among them- selves that they would fast ...", he does not mean that each of them had intended to do all those things; he only means that those people among themselves

1 al-Ṭabrisī has named nine of them in this composite narration. Obviously, he has gleaned these names from various traditions. (Trans.)

had decided to do one or the other of those things.

Although the traditions vary in their themes and there are weak, *mursal* and reliable ones among them, yet meditation on all of them creates a certainty that a group of the companions had decided to adopt that type of abstinence and asceticism, and ʿAlī and ʿUthmān b. Maẓ'ūn were among them, and that the Prophet had said to them, "Whoever dislikes my *sunnah* is not from me." And God knows better. You should refer to the books of exegesis which explain the Qur'an with the help of traditions, like *al-Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī, *al-Durru al-manthūr*, *Fatḥ al-qadīr* and so on.

(3) It has been narrated by al-Tirmidhī (who said that it was good), Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn ʿUdayy (in al-Kāmil), al-Ṭabarānī and Ibn Marduwayh, from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said, "A man came to the Prophet and said, 'O Messenger of God! Whenever I eat meat I become roused and overcome by sexual desire; and I have forbidden meat to myself.' Then the verse was revealed: *O you who believe! Do not forbid (yourselves) the good things which Allah has made lawful for you*." (*al-Durru al-manthūr*)

(4) Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim have narrated from Zayd b. Aslam that he said, "Verily ʿAbdullāh b. Rawāḥah had a guest from among his relatives; and he (ʿAbdullāh) was near the Prophet. Then he returned to his family and found that they had not given food to their guest, waiting for him (to return). So he said to his wife, 'You detained my guest because of me, this (food) is unlawful to me.' So his wife said, 'It is unlawful to me'; the guest said, 'It is unlawful to me. When (ʿAbdullāh) saw this, he put his hand (in food) and said, 'Eat you in the name of God.' Then he went to the Prophet and informed him. The Prophet said, 'You did right.' Then God revealed: *O you who believe! Do not forbid (yourselves) the good things which Allah has made lawful for you*. (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: Possibly, the two reasons mentioned in the last two traditions are the narrators' attempts to fit an event on the verse, and this is very common in the reasons of revelation. Also, possibly there may be several reasons for a single verse.

(5) ʿAbdullāh b. Sinān said, "I asked him (the Imam) about a man who said that his wife would be divorced, or his slaves would be free, if he drank any unlawful or lawful (drink). (The Imam) said, 'As for the unlawful he should not go near it, whether he swore the

oath or did not swear; and as for the lawful he should not leave it, because he has no right to forbid what God has made lawful, because God says: *O you who believe! Do not forbid (yourselves) the good things which Allah has made lawful for you*; therefore, there is nothing on him regarding his oath concerning lawful things.'" (*al-Tafsīr*, *al-ʿAyyāshī*)

(6) (al-Kulaynī) narrates through his chain from Mas'adah b. Ṣadaqah that he heard Abū ʿAbdillāh saying about the words of God: *Allah does not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths*: "al-Laghw (vain) is the word of a man, 'No, by God', and 'Certainly, by God', while he has no serious thought of anything." (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comment: al-ʿAyyāshī has narrated in his *al-Tafsīr* a similar *ḥadīth* from ʿAbdullāh b. Sinān; and another similar one from Muḥammad b. Muslim with one difference at the end where it says, "no serious thought on it."

(7) Ibn Jarīr has narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās that he said, "When the verse: *O you who believe! Do not forbid (yourselves) the good things which Allah has made lawful for you*, was revealed regarding those who had forbidden women and meat to themselves, they said, 'O Messenger of God! What should we do with the oaths which we have made?' Then God revealed: *Allah does not call you to account for what is vain in your oaths*." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: This tradition resembles the end part of the first tradition, which we have quoted in the beginning. The trouble is that it does not fit the apparent meaning of the verse, because making oath for avoiding an obligatory or permissible action is not devoid of deliberate serious thought; the verse has put: what is vain in your oaths, opposite the clause: making of deliberate oaths; it shows that a vain oath is that which is devoid of deliberation and thinking. This apparent meaning agrees with the *ḥadīth* which explains vain oath as someone's saying, 'No, by God', and 'Certainly, by God' without any serious thought on it. As for that oath which is nullified by the *sharī'ah*, it is, or was, made with deliberate seriousness. Therefore it is imperative to ascribe its nullification to the *sunnah*, not the Book.

Moreover, the context of the verse is the strongest proof that it aims independently at describing the expiation of breaking of oath, and orders to preserve its sanctity; and it is not just an aside, as that explanation would make it.

Verses 90–93

The verses are in conformity with each other in context; probably they all were revealed together or at short intervals. The last verse aims at removing a possible misunderstanding, as we shall describe. All this deals with the topic of intoxicants, although one adds to it the games of chance; and the other, games of chance and sacrificing to set up stones and dividing by arrows.

It has been mentioned earlier in volume two of the book under the verse[1]: *They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: "In both of them there is a great sin and* (*some*) *profit for men; and their sin is greater than their profit."* (2:219); and in volume four[2] under the verse: *O you who believe! Do not go near prayer when you are intoxicated until you know* (*well*) *what you say*, (4:43), that these two verses together with the verse: *Say: "My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed, and sin ...* (7:33), and the verses under discussion, *that is,: O you who believe! Intoxicants and games of chance and* (*sacrificing to*) *stones set up and* (*dividing by*) *arrows are only an abomination of the Satan's handiwork; shun it therefore that you may be successful. The Satan only desires to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you off from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you then desist?* If these verses are studied together, their diverse context shows that the Legislator had adopted a course of gradual progression in prohibition of intoxicants.

By gradual progression we do not mean that He had gone step by step; that it began with aversion and loathing, then displeasure, and finally ended at clear prohibition; giving an example of abrogation. Nor do we say that it had progressed from vague description to clear declaration, or from secret allusion to clear statement because of the religious policy in enforcement of the laws of *sharī'ah*. Such ideas are untenable because the verse 7:33 had clearly prohibited 'sin', and it was in a Meccan chapter; then came the verse

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol.3. (Trans.)

2 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol.8. (Trans.)

that in them there is a great sin (2:219), and it is in the chapter of "The Cow" which was the first detailed chapter revealed at Medina. When these two verses are studied in conjunction, they clearly show the prohibition of intoxicants without leaving any room for any excuse or reinterpretation.

The gradual progression mentioned above, in fact, means that the Qur'an first forbade the intoxicants in a general context, and it was when it described it as a sin. Then it went ahead by prohibiting it in particular in the form of advice and admonition; this method was used in the verses: Say: "In both of them there is a great sin and some profit for men; and their sin is greater than their profit"; and, do not go near prayer when you are intoxicated until you know (well) what you say (if this verse had spoken about intoxication of liquor, and not of sleep). Finally, there came the prohibition of intoxicants in particular conjoined with the most emphatic intensity which is seen in the verses under discussion: *O you who believe! Intoxicants and games of chance and* (*sacrificing to*) *stones set up and* (*dividing by*) *arrows are only an abomination of the Satan's handiwork; shun it therefore that you may be successful. The Satan only desires to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you off from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you then desist?*

These verses were the last to be revealed concerning the intoxicants. We may easily see as to how many devices of emphasis have been used in them: They begin with *innamā* (but only); then name it "an abomination" and ascribe it to the Satan's handiwork; then give an unambiguous order to shun it and give the hope that by shunning it "you may be successful"; then it elaborates the evil consequences of taking intoxicants, and asks them whether they would desist.[1] This is followed by the order of obeying God and His Messenger and warning them to be cautious, implying that God and His Messenger have no need of them if they disobey their laws. The last verse of this piece (There is no blame on those who) also hints to this connotation, as we shall explain later.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِنْ

1 Giving the order of desisting by using the mode of question has intensified its impact. (Trans.)

عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

(5:90) O you who believe! Intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are only an abomination of the Satan's handiwork; shun it therefore that you may be successful.

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The meanings of intoxicant, games of chance, sacrificing to set up stones and dividing by arrows have been explained in the beginning of this chapter. *al-Khamr* is every intoxicating fermented liquid, which covers the reason. *al-Maysir* is gambling of any type. *al-Anṣāb* means the idols or stones which were set up for slaughtering the sacrificial animals upon, and which were held in esteem and considered a source of blessings. *al-Azlām* were the arrows used for division of a camel's shares; often this name was given to the arrows used for omen before beginning an important work like journey, etc. But this word has been used in the chapter's beginning for the former meaning (because it is included among the things unlawful to eat); therefore, it has the same meaning in this verse too.

Objection: Games of chance in its general meaning includes the former meaning of *al-azlām*, that is, division by arrows; and there is no reason to mention a particular after the general without any apparent cause. Therefore, the only alternative would be to interpret *al-azlām* as the arrows of oracle, which was common feature in the Era of Ignorance. A poet had said:

If the tribe of Judhaymah have killed their (own) chiefs, So their women hit with arrows.

Reportedly, the method of oracle-seeking through arrows was like this: They used to take three slim arrow like pieces of wood; on one was written, 'Do'; on another was written, 'Don't do'; and the third was left blank; all three were put in a small bag, and all were similar (in size, etc.). When a man wanted to begin any important work, like a journey, etc., he took out one arrow; if it was the one with 'Do', he determined to do it; if the arrow was the one with 'Don't do', the idea was abandoned; if the blank arrow came out, the process was repeated—until one of the written arrows came out. This method was called *istiqsām* (to seek a share), that is, what is in his fate like sustenance or some other good things. The verse proves its unlawfulness because it contains the claim of the knowledge of

future. The same is the position of similar other things like *istikhārah* by rosary and so on.

Reply: You have seen that the clause: (Forbidden to you is) ... that you divide by the arrows, which has come at the beginning of the chapter (verse 3), manifestly speaks about prohibition of dividing the meat of an animal by using the arrows, which was a sort of gambling, because it is included among the unlawful food; and it supports the view that in this verse too 'arrows' has the same connotation.

However, if we admit that this verse has no connection with the verse 3, then the word 'arrows' will be having more than one meaning, and it will need an association for pinpointing its intended meaning; in sort, its interpretation will depend on traditions. And there are numerous traditions narrated from the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt which allow seeking divine guidance through rosary, etc. when one feels really perplexed.[1]

What is *istikhārah*? When man intends to embark on an important work, it is possible for him to know of its appropriateness, by using the power of thought which God has given him, or by seeking the advice of those who have the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. However, if these two methods fail to make him recognize the correct way, and he is still bewildered, then he should choose his course of action after paying some attention to his Lord, and seeking His help.

When man chooses what he chooses through this type of seeking good, or *istikhārah*, he cannot be accused of claiming to know the unseen; nor does he meddle with the divine affairs, which are exclusively reserved with God. It does not involve allowing someone other than God to join with Him in management of affairs, nor it entails any other religious problem. Because the only function of *istikhārah* is to decide positively or negatively about a course of action without making it obligatory or unlawful or giving it any other shade of religious responsibility. Also, it does not claim to unveil the good or the evil that is hidden behind the curtains of the unseen. It only shows what is better for the man concerned whether he should or should not do that work; in this way he comes out of bewilderment and hesitation (with a firm resolve.)

As for what follows that action or non-action, it may turn out to be

1 It is generally called istikhārah, that is to seek good. (Trans.)

good and it may equally result in evil—in the same way as it happens when a man opts for a course of action by his own thinking or by someone's advice. Thus, *istikhārah*, like one's own thinking or well-wishers' advice, is merely a way to remove hesitation or confusion while taking a practical step; and the result of acting upon it is not different from that of an action done by one's own meditation or by someone's advice.

Of course, someone may think looking at the traditions about seeking good omens from the Qur'an, etc., that it entails a sort of a claim of the knowledge of the unseen; because often the soul expects from it good or bad result, or benefit or harm. But it has been narrated in correct *ḥadīth*, through the chains of both sects that the Prophet sought good omen by good things and ordered it, and forbade (to believe in) ill omen and ordered to pass over it and rely on God.

Therefore, there is nothing to prevent seeking omen from the Qur'an, etc.; if the result of that omen seeking is good, it is OK. Otherwise, he should proceed ahead in that affair relying on God, the High. Its ultimate effect is to create satisfaction in mind about the affairs and actions, which he believes, would bring happiness and benefit to him. We shall write on this topic in detail in a place devoted to it particularly.

Now, it is clear that some exegetes are totally wrong when they have taken the 'arrows' as referring to their practice of oracle seeking; and then arriving at the conclusion that *istikhārah* was unlawful.

As for the clause: an abomination of the satan's handiwork: *al-Rijs* (abomination) is dirty thing as al-Rāghib has said in his *al-Mufradāt*; so *al-Rajāsah* like *al-Najāsah* and *al-qadhārah* is that factor because of which one keeps away and refrains from a thing as the nature distastes it.

The items enumerated in the verse—intoxicants, games of chance, sacrificing to set up stones and dividing by arrows—are described as abominations because they have such a characteristic which the human nature is repulsed with and does not like to go near it. And that characteristic is its being devoid of all such things that contain human happiness—the happiness which sometimes appears in its pure form, which is probably alluded to in the divine words: *they ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: "In both of them there is a great sin and* (some) *profit for men; and their sin is greater than their profit*" (2:219). Note how sin is given dominance over profit without exception.

Probably, that is the reason why these abominations have been ascribed to the Satan's handiwork alone without joining him to others. Then He says in the next verse: *The Satan only desires to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you off from remembrance of Allah and from prayer.*

It is because God has clearly described the Satan as the enemy of man who never wants any good to reach to man. He says: s*urely the Satan is an open enemy to man* (12:5). *Against him it is written down that whoever takes him for a friend, he shall lead him astray ...* (22:4); *... and they do not call on anything but a rebellious Satan; Allah has cursed him; ...* (4:117–8) In these verses God has confirmed His curse on the Satan and has removed him away from every good.

Also, He has mentioned that the Satan's contact with man and the extent of his action about him is only through seduction, temptation and enticement by putting ideas in his mind; as God quotes him as saying: He said: "*My Lord! Because thou hast left me to stray, I will certainly make (evil) fair seeming to them on earth, and I will certainly cause them all to deviate, except Thy servants from among them, the freed ones.*" *He said: "This is a straight path with Me: Surely as regards My servants, thou hast no authority over them except those who follow thee of the deviators.*" (15:39–42). It should be noted that the Satan had threatened only to cause them to deviate, and God negated the Satan's authority except on his followers from among the deviators. Again, God quotes him as speaking to the children of Adam on the Day of Resurrection: *... and I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you answered my call, ...* (14:22). And God describes the Satan's call in these words: *O children of Adam! Let not the Satan cause you to fall into affliction as he got your parents out from the garden, ... he surely sees you, he as well as his host, from whence you cannot see them; ...* (7:27). It means that his call is not like men calling someone being face to face with each other; but the Satan calls men while he sees them but not vice versa.

This topic has been clarified in the chapter 114, where it says: *From the evil of the whisperings of the slinking Satan, who whispers into the hearts of men, from among the jinn and the men* (4–6). Thus, God makes it clear that the Satan's dealings with man are based on his creating ideas in man's heart, and in this way he calls him to error.

All this shows that when intoxicants and other items are called

abominations of the Satan's handiwork, it is because these items are ultimately based on the Satan's action which is exclusively related to him; and his modus operandi is creating ideas in man's heart—the Satanic whispering that calls him to error. That is why it is called abomination or uncleanness; God has called error as uncleanness, as He says: ... *and* (*for*) *whomsoever He intends that He should leave him to err, He makes his breast strait and narrow as though he were ascending into the sky; thus does Allah lay uncleanness on those who do not believe* (6:126).

What is the connotation of intoxicants and other items being an abomination of the Satan's handiwork? The next verse clarifies it: *The Satan only desires to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you off from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer*. That is, the Satan's motive in calling you to intoxicants and games of chance is nothing except evil; thus it is an abomination of his handiwork.

Objection: The sum total of the above explanation is that the intoxicants and other items mentioned therein are abominations only because making it, drinking it (or using it) ultimately returns to the satanic temptation. But several traditions prove that it was the Satan himself who appeared before man and made liquor for the first time and taught him how to make it.

Reply: Yes. Although these traditions are merely solitary and as such it is not incumbent on us to accept them; yet there are many and diversified traditions, narrated under different chapters, which show that the Satan took shape and appeared before many prophets and friends of God and even before some other men. Also, there are reports about the angels appearing before them. There are still other narrations showing that the world and the deeds take (human or other) shapes; and so on. The divine Book too supports this view to some extent, as God says: *then We sent to her Our spirit, and so he appeared to her as a well-made man* (19:17). We shall fully discuss this topic, God willing, in the exegesis of the chapter 17, under the verse: *Glory be to Him Who made His servant to go on a night* (vr.1), or in some other appropriate place.

It should be understood that if a report or story appears in one or more traditions, it does not have the authority to change the apparent connotation of a Qur'anic verse, especially when it is supported by other verses. The

verses clearly show that the Satan has no more authority on man than creating ideas in his mind. Even if he appeared in physical form before a man and made something or taught him to make it, the net result was no more than seduction and temptation in his mind or imparting some information and knowledge. You should wait for the coming elaborate discussion.

"Shun it therefore that you may be successful": It lays down the prohibition in unambiguous words, after describing its evil effects; this style has more impact on the souls. Then is expressed the hope of being successful if they would shun it. This gives intense emphasis to the prohibition, as it asserts that there would be no hope of success for those who would not refrain from these abominations.

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ ۖ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ ﴿٩١﴾

(5:91) The Satan only desires to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you off from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you then desist?

> al-Rāghib has said in his *al-Mufradāt*: "*al-'Adw* connotes overstepping, transgression and disharmony; sometimes it is related to heart, then it is called enmity and feud; at other times it is ascribed to walking, then it is called running; yet at other occasions it refers to lack of justice in dealings, then it means transgression and overstepping; God says: *... lest exceeding the limits they should abuse Allah out of ignorance*. (6:108); at times it refers to parts of habitation, and then it is said, *al-'adwā'*, they say: a place having *'adwā'*, that is, whose parts are not in harmony with each other; from 'enmity' is derived *'aduww* so they say, enemy man, enemy nation; God says: *... some of you being the enemies of others; ...* (2:36). Its plural comes as *'idayy* and *a'dā'*; God says: *And on the day that the enemies of Allah shall be brought together ...* (41:19)."

al-Bughd (hatred) and *al-baghḍā'* (intense hatred) are the opposite of love and to turn away. *al-intihā'* is to obey a prohibition and is also the opposite of beginning (*al-ibtida'*).

As mentioned earlier, this verse aims at explaining the clause: the

Satan's handiwork, or an abomination of the Satan's handiwork. It is the reality of these items being: the Satan's handiwork, or an abomination of the Satan's handiwork, that the only goal and purpose he wants to achieve from the intoxicants and the games of chance (which are abominations of his handiwork only) is to create enmity and hatred amongst you by making you transgress your limits and hate one another, as well as to divert your attention from the remembrance of God and from prayer, keeping you engaged in the intoxicants, games of chance, sacrificing to set up stones and dividing by arrows.

Only the intoxicants and the games of chance are singled out as causing enmity and hatred, because the two effects are their more apparent results. Look at liquor and intoxicants: Its use agitates nervous system in such a way that it covers and dominates the reason and brings up bigotry. If it incites anger, it lets the intoxicated person commit any felony, however serious and ugly it might be, which even beasts of pray do not do. If incites desire and lust, it makes to seem fair in his eyes all types of ugliness and debauchery, be it in his self, property or honor, in what he believes to be sacred and sanctified in religion or society, etc. He will commit theft and embezzlement, will not keep a secret, nor maintain the limit of a prohibited thing; in short he will indulge in affairs, which are destructive to humanity. Available data show that intoxicants have the lion's share in various types of felonies and debaucheries in that society where drinking liquor is prevalent.

As for the games of chance, that is, gambling, it squanders in a short time all the endeavours a man had exercised for a long period in acquirement of wealth, property and status. Gambling throws the wealth away, and often it destroys honor, life, and prestige. If a gambler wins and gets wealth, it encourages him to abandon moderate way of life and indulge extravagantly in debauchery; he becomes indifferent towards earning his livelihood through lawful means. And if he loses, the loss of wealth and bitterness of defeat, leads to enmity and hatred towards the winner, and leaves irritation and grief in its wake.

Although these evil results do not manifest themselves so clearly to the simple minds in infrequent and rare cases for the first or second time, but the rare leads to dominant, the little pulls to numerous, and once becomes many times; and it does not take long for this evil to prevail in the society,

and seep through all strata of the community; it thus turns into a barbaric free for all where unruly passions dominate and destructive desires rule.

All this shows that the exclusive particle *innamā* (only, but) in the verse: "The Satan only desires to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you off from the remembrance of God and from prayer," covers all the items enumerated earlier on the whole, yet prevention from the remembrance of God and from prayer is inflicted by all, and the enmity and hatred are especial effects of the intoxicants and games of chance by nature.

Although prayer is a kind of the remembrance of God, yet God has mentioned it separately in the clause: "and to keep you off from the remembrance of God and from prayer"; it shows how much importance the prayer has in the eyes of *sharī'ah*, because it is the perfect entity of the remembrance. The Prophet has said in a correct *ḥadīth*: 'The prayer is the pillar of religion'; and the Qur'an in numerous verses shows its unparalleled significance, which no one can entertain any doubt about. For example: *Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers* (23:1–2); *And* (*as for*) *those who hold fast by the Book and keep up prayer, surely We do not waste the reward of the good doers* (7:170); *Surely man is created of a hasty temperament; being greatly grieved when evil afflicts him, and niggardly when good befalls him, except those who pray* (70:19–22); *Recite that which has been revealed to you of the Book and keep up prayer; surely prayer keeps* (*one*) *away from indecency and evil, and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest* ... (29:45); ... *then hasten to the remembrance of Allah* ... (62:9), (it refers to prayer); ... *and keep up prayer for My remembrance* (20:14); and there are many other such verses.

God, in this verse under discussion, has given precedence to His remembrance over prayer, because the remembrance is the only objective of the Divine Mission; it is the spirit of life in the body of servitude, and the basis of happiness in this world and the next. It may be seen in the words of God to Adam the first day He laid down the *sharī'ah* for him: He said: "*Get down you two therefrom, all (of you), one of you (is) enemy to another. So if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy. And whoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall surely be a straitened life, and We shall raise him, on the Day of Resurrection, blind*" (20:123–4); *And on the day when*

He shall gather them, and whatever they worshiped besides Allah, He shall say: "Was it you who led astray these my servants, or did they themselves go astray from the path?" They shall say: "Glory be to Thee! It was not beseeming for us that we should take any guardians besides Thee, but Thou didst make them and their fathers to enjoy until they forsook the remembrance, and they were a people in perdition." (25:17–18); *Therefore turn aside from him who turns his back upon Our remembrance and does not desire anything but this world's life. That is the (last) reach of their knowledge*; ... (53:29–30).

Remembrance in the Qur'anic verses only connotes that which stands opposite to oblivion of the side of Lordship which brings in its wake oblivion of the side of servitude; and the servitude, the humble adoration, is that religious behavior which is the only path to bring good fortune and happiness to the soul. God says: *And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget their own souls ...* (59:19).

As for the end clause: "Will you then desist?" it is a reproving question, which indicates that the Muslims had somehow failed to desist from the prohibitions that had preceded this one. The verse: "*The Satan only desires ...*" is a sort of explanation that explains the verse: *They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: "In both of them there is a great sin and some profit for men; and their sin is greater than their profit*" (2:219). That is, their profit which is supposed to accompany the great sin is not of a type that could be separated at sometime from the sin or the greater sin; unlike the lie which contains sin and profit, and occasionally its profit may be separated from its sin, e.g., a lie spoken for removing misunderstanding between two persons.

It is because of the exclusive particle: "only", in the verse: "*The Satan only desires to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you off from the remembrance of God and from prayer,*" which comes after the words: *only an abomination of the Satan's handiwork*. It means that it is nothing other than an abomination of the Satan's handiwork, and the Satan's only aim is to create enmity and hatred among you through the intoxicants and the games of chance, and to prevent you from the remembrance of God and from the prayer. In this framework, no situation can arise where these items' profit could be separated from their sin. In no circumstances they could ever be supposed to be lawful. Understand it.

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَاحْذَرُوا ۚ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا عَلَىٰ رَسُولِنَا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٩٢﴾

(5:92) And obey Allah and obey the Messenger and be cautious; but if you turn back, then know that only a clear deliverance (of the message) is (incumbent) on Our Messenger.

The verse emphasizes the preceding command to abstain from these abominations. It does so by first ordering obedience to God, and He has the authority to lay down a law; then by ordering obedience to the Messenger, and he has the authority of implementation; and lastly by giving warning in clear words.

Then comes further emphasis in the words: "*but if you turn back, then know that only a clear deliverance (of the message) is (incumbent) on Our Messenger.*" This emphasis contains a serious warning, particularly as it begins with the word: "then know"; it has an allusion that if you turn back and indulge in these sins, probably you think that you are showing arrogance to the Prophet by going against his prohibition and that in this way you have defeated him; but you do not understand—or you have forgotten—that he is Our Messenger to you; he has no authority except a clear delivery of the message which is revealed to him and which he is ordered to deliver; actually you are only disputing with God in His Lordship.

It has been described in the beginning that these verses contain numerous modes of emphasizing the prohibition of these items. Look how it begins with the words: *O you who believe!* Then comes the exclusive particle, *innamā* (only), then its description as an abomination, then its ascription to the Satan's handiwork, then the clear order to shun it; then the hope of success resulting from that shunning. Then comes the description of their general evil—enmity and hatred, averting from remembrance of God and from prayer. Then the rebuke at their indifference to desisting followed by the command to obey God and the Messenger, and the final warning in case of turning away after the clear deliverance.

لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا طَعِمُوا إِذَا مَا اتَّقَوْا وَآمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَآمَنُوا ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَأَحْسَنُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ

يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾

(5:93) There is no blame on those who believe and do good deeds for what they have eaten, when they fear Allah and believe and do good deeds, then they fear Allah and believe, then they fear Allah and do good, and Allah loves those who do good.

al-Ṭa'm and *al-Ṭa'ām* means to eat; it is used for taking food, not drink; the Madinans use it for wheat only; sometimes it is used in the meaning of taste, and then it is used for drinking too, as it is for eating. God says: ... *who- ever then drinks from it, he is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me* ... (2:249). And it has come in a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet that he said about the water of Zamzam: "Verily it is (*ṭa'āmu ṭu'min*) a satisfier of the stomach (of man, like as is food), and a remedy for a disease."

The context of the verse makes it certain that it is connected with the preceding verses. As such it aims at answering an unspoken question: What will be the position of those believers who were indulged in drinking liquor before the revelation of (its) prohibition, or before the revelation of these verses? It is because the words: "for what they have eaten" are general, it is not restricted by anything that could restrict it. The verse aims at removing blame from this general food, and this removal of blame has been qualified with the clauses: "when they fear God and believe, then they fear God and do good." This condition in which fear of God or piety has been mentioned three times makes it certain that it means intense piety, as the piety should be.

Now, let us see what would be the implication of the disavowal of blame from pious believers for whatever they eat (lawful nourishment): If it implies assertion of blame for the opposite group, that is, affirmation of general prohibition to non-pious persons from all believers and unbelievers, it is rebuttable by verses such as: *Say: "Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants and the good provisions?" Say: "These are for the believers in the life of this world, purely (theirs) on the Resurrection Day ..."* (7:32).

Moreover, it is known from the taste of this religion that it does not stop anyone from savoring the lawful good things which human nature is bound to use in the life.

Alternatively, if the verse is not meant to show its prohibition to the

opposite group, then it would imply: that food is lawful for those who believe and do good provided that they fear God, then fear God, and then fear God. But it is known that its lawfulness is not restricted to the believers who do good, rather it is common to believers and unbelievers altogether; and even if we suppose that it is restricted to them, no one says that the permission depends on such a hard condition. (As both these alternatives are untenable, the supposition, that the verse removes blame from pious believers for whatever lawful food they eat, has no leg to stand upon.)

There are many such interpretations, based on the view that: "for what they have eaten" refers to lawful food in a general way; but none is free from either of the two objections mentioned above. It is because the meaning given by them revolves around the following proposition: There is no blame on those who believe and do good, when they avoid unlawful things, for eating lawful things. And this meaning cannot be free from either objection, as is clearly understood.

Some have said: There is an omission in verse; the complete verse is as follows: There is no blame on those who believe and do good for what they have eaten and for other things when they abstain from unlawful things.

Comment: It supposes an omission without any proof to support it; apart from that, the original objection still stands.

Someone else has said: The combination of belief and good deeds is not the primary condition in itself; rather, the essential point is to emphasize the necessity of abstaining from what is unlawful. The mention of belief and good deeds alongside this is to underscore the urgency and obligation of such avoidance.

Comment: The verse manifestly shows that it aims at removal of blame for what they have eaten, and it is not dependent on belief, good deed, or avoidance of unlawful things—as we have explained earlier. How far is this supposed meaning from the apparent meaning of the verse!

A third one has said: So far as a believer is concerned, it is all right to say that there is no blame on him; but an unbeliever deserves punishment, so he cannot be declared blameless.

Comment: There is no reason why the verse should be restricted to the believers. In fact, it is not unlike the verse: *Say:* "*Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants and the good provision?*" ... (7:32); and the verse: *Say:* "*I do not find in that*

which has been revealed to me anything forbidden for an eater to eat of except that it be what has died of itself, or blood poured forth, or flesh of swine ..." (6:145), inasmuch as it lays down a general principle without addressing it to believer or unbeliever. Or it is like the verse: *O you people! Surely We have created you of a male and a female and made you nations and tribes that you may recognize each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you who is most pious* (49:13), as it is addressed to the people, which include believers and unbelievers both.

Another one has said: The unbeliever has closed for himself the path of knowing unlawfulness and lawfulness; that is why the verse speaks particularly about the believers.

Comment: The objections mentioned earlier apply to this interpretation also; moreover, it does not remove the difficulty arising out of the words: *when they fear Allah ...*

Thus, it is appropriate to say that the verse is connected with the preceding ones, and it looks at the condition of those Muslims who had indulged in drinking liquor, or in using it or eating from winnings of gambling or from what had been sacrificed to idols. It appears as if they had asked, after the clear prohibition was revealed to them, regarding him who had used liquor or indulged in other unlawful things mentioned above, before the revelation of prohibition—from among those Muslims who had passed away, or those who were present at that time and had willingly surrendered to the divine law.

Now, this verse answers their question, saying that there was no blame on those Muslims provided they were among those who believed and did good deeds, if they were proceeding on the path of piety with belief in God and good deeds, then believing in every law revealed to the Prophet, then doing good in acting according to the revealed commandment.

It appears from the above discourse that the relative clause: "what they have eaten," refers to intoxicants (and 'eaten' stands for drunk); or it includes all the above mentioned items—intoxicants, gambling, and animals sacrificed to stones or divided by arrows—while the eating points to their various uses. The meaning: There is no blame on those who believe and do good for what they have tasted—before the revelation of prohibition—of intoxicants; or of intoxicants and the other unlawful items described in the verse.

... when they fear God and believe and do good deeds, then they fear God and believes, then they fear God and do good: Apparently, the clause: "when they fear God and believe and do good deeds," repeats the same theme that has been described in the preceding clause: "There is no blame on those who believe and do good deeds"; it shows that these characteristics of belief and good deeds have a hand in nullification of blame. The same style is seen in the verse: *with this is admonished whosoever among you believes in Allah and the last day ...* (2:232). Such expressions are widely used in the language.

... then they fear Allah and believe: It takes into account "belief after the first mentioned belief." It can only mean a detailed belief in every law brought by the Messenger from his Lord, without rejection or denial; inevitably it implies submission to the Messenger in all that he orders and forbids. God says: *O you who believe! Fear Allah and believe in His Messenger: ...* (57:28); *And We did not send any messenger but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission; But no! By your Lord! They do not believe until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then do not find any straitness in their hearts as to what you have decided and submit with total submission* (4:64–65). There are numerous verses of this theme.

... then they fear God and do good: Apparently, it adds doing good to the belief after belief, with an aim to show its importance. *al-Iḥsān* means performance of an act because of its goodness—without false intentions. God says: *Surely* (*as for*) *those who believe and do good, We do not waste the reward of him who does a good work* (18:30). Also, He says: (*As for*) *those who responded to the call of Allah and the Messenger* (*even*) *after the wound had afflicted them, those among them who do good and fear* (*God*) *shall have a great reward* (3:172). That is, their response emanates from their seeking nearness to God and their total submission to Him, and not for any other motive. *al-Iḥsān* (doing good) is also used as transitive verb, that is, to do with someone what he thinks good; as God says: *... and* (*you shall do*) *good to* (*your*) *parents, ...* (2:83); *and do good* (*to others*) *as Allah has done good to you,* (28:77).

According to the context, the first of the two meanings is more appropriate for the clause under discussion, that is, to do a work because of its goodness. The religious piety is not given its full due with merely believing

in God and affirming truth of His religion, unless one believes in detail in each and every laid down law of the *sharī'ah*; because rejection of even one of those laws is rejection of the religion itself. And even the detailed belief in each and every law does not give piety its full due unless he acts according to the law in good manner, proceeding according to the demands of the law by implementing it or abstaining from it; and that proceeding must be based on total obedience, not on a hypocritical intention. Therefore, it is incumbent on him who is equipped with provision of piety to believe in God and do good deeds, and to believe in His Messenger in all that he has brought with him, proceeding in all this on the path of obedience and good doing.

The verse has repeated piety (fear of God) three times and has qualified all the three stages with it. It emphatically points to the fact that all three stages must be connected to real piety without any shade of any other irreligious motive. It has been mentioned somewhere in the preceding discourses that piety is not a special religious position; it is rather a spiritual condition that coexists with all spiritual positions. In other words, each spiritual station has a particular piety, which is reserved to it.

In short, the foregoing discourse shows that the verse means as follows: There is no blame on those who believe and do good deeds for what they had tasted and used of the intoxicants and the other unlawful items, provided they adhere to piety in all their conditions, hold fast to the belief in God and His Messenger, and do good deeds by performing all obligatory things and refraining from all unlawful things prohibited to them. However, if they had indulged in any abomination of the Satan's handiwork, before the revelation of the prohibiting verse, before it had reached them, or before they understood its connotation, it will do them no harm.

It is like the words of God in the matter of the change of *qiblah*, in reply to their query regarding the prayers which they had prayed facing other than the Ka'bah: *... and Allah was not going to make your faith to be fruitless ...* (2:143).

Its context is another witness that the verse: "There is no blame on those who believe and do good deeds, ..." is connected with the preceding verses, and that it was revealed with those verses (whose language testifies that they were the last to be revealed on the subject of intoxicants); and that some Muslims had not discarded the habit of drinking liquor between the

period when the first verses were revealed till the revelation of these verses.

Then the question arose, after these verses were revealed, about the condition of those who had indulged in it: Some had used it before the prohibition; others had done so before learning the law, and some without any excuse. God replied them specifying for each group its order as related to its particular condition. He who drank it while he believed and did good deed—and it could be only those believers who did so before the revelation of prohibition or because they did not know of its unlawfulness—there was no blame on him; and as for others, the law concerning them is different.

The exegetes have written lengthy discussions on this verse. Some are concerned with explanation of: "what they have eaten," and we have given a short detail of it.

Others have expressed their opinions about the end portion of the verse, where it repeats piety and fear of God three times, and repeats belief and then good deeds and ends at doing good. (Their opinions may be summarized as follows):

The clause: "*when they fear God and believe and do good deeds,*" means: When they avoid unlawful things and remain steadfast on belief and good deeds; then the clause: "*then they fear God and believe,*" means: Then they avoid what has been forbidden them like intoxicants, and believe in its prohibition; and the clause: "*then they fear God and do good,*" means: Then they remain steadfast and continue to firmly shun the disobedience, and remain engaged in good deeds.

This repetition looks at three situations as man uses belief and piety between himself and his soul, between himself and the people, and between himself and God; accordingly doing good means doing good to others.

The repetition looks at three stages: The beginning, the middle, and the end, that is, the piety as it should be.

The repetition is in consideration of what is feared of. One should leave the forbidden things for fear of chastisement; should avoid doubtful things as a precaution against falling into unlawful things, and should abstain from some permissible things for preventing the soul from meanness and keeping it clean from blemish.

It has been said that the first piety is avoidance of drinking liquor, and the first belief is the belief in God; the second piety is the continuation of the first piety, and the second belief is the continuation of the first one;

and the third piety is performance of obligatory deeds, and doing good is performance of supererogatory deeds.

It has also been said that the first piety is avoidance of sins known through reason, and the first belief is believing in God and in evil of theses sins; the second piety is avoidance of sins known through *sharī'ah*, and the second belief is believing in obligatoriness of avoiding these sins; and the third piety concerns especially with rights of the people and with the injustice and iniquity *vis-à-vis* other persons; and doing good refers to doing good to others.

The first condition (that is, when they fear God ...) is reserved for the past; the second, for its continuation, and the third one is reserved particularly to the people's rights.

There are many similar opinions. But there is no proof either in the wording of the verse or somewhere else that could justify application of the verse on any of their interpretations; and it becomes manifest when one contemplates on its context and refers to what we have explained earlier.

Examining Narrations

(1) Hishām b. Sālim narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he heard him saying, "While Ḥamzah b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and (some of) his companions were (drinking) a liquor named *al-sukarkah*[1]" He said, "Then they talked about al-Sharīf[2], and Ḥamzah said, 'How can we find it?' They said, 'There is this she-camel of your nephew, ʿAlī.' So he went forth to it and slaughtered it; then took its liver and hump and brought it to them." He said, "When ʿAlī, came and saw his she-camel, he was smitten by it. They said to him, 'Your uncle Ḥamzah has done it.'" He said, "So he went to the Prophet, and complained to him of it."

He said, "Then the Messenger of God came with him. Ḥamzah was told, 'Here is the Messenger of God at the door.'" He said, "So Ḥamzah came out and he was enraged. When the Messenger of God saw (the sign of) anger in his face, he returned." He said, "Then Ḥamzah said to him, 'If the son of Abū Ṭālib wanted to

1 Liquor made from a variety of sorghum or millet. (Trans.)

2 Its meaning in this context is not clear. (Trans.)

lead you by a halter he could do it.' Then Ḥamzah entered his house and the Prophet came back."

He said, "It was before (the battle of) Uḥud." He said, "Then God revealed the prohibition of liquor. So, the Messenger of God ordered their (liquor) pots to be turned over." He said, "Then the call went out to the people to proceed to Uḥud. The Messenger of God went forth, and the people went forth, and Ḥamzah went forth. He stood in the side of the Prophet." He said, "When they stood in line, he attacked the people (that is, unbelievers) until he was swallowed up among them; then he returned to his place. The people (that is, the believers) said to him: 'God! God! O Uncle of the Messenger of God! That you should go (that is, die) and there be something against you in the heart of the Messenger of God.'" He said, "Then he attacked again until he disappeared amongst the people; then he returned to his place. They (again) said to him: 'God! God! O Uncle of the Messenger of God! That you should go and there be something against you in the heart of the Messenger of God.'

"So he proceeded towards the Prophet. When he saw him (coming towards him), he proceeded to his direction, embraced him, and the Messenger of God kissed his forehead, then said, 'Launch attack on the people.' Then Ḥamzah was martyred, and the Messenger of God gave him a shroud of *tamrah*." Then Abū ʿAbdillāh explained it saying, "Like this *suryānī*. When his face was covered his feet were opened, and when his feet were covered his face was opened." He said, "So he covered his face with it and put *idhkhir*[1] on his feet."

He said, "The people fled away and ʿAlī remained. The Messenger of God said to him, 'What did you do?' He said, 'O Messenger of God! I adhered to (this) place.' He said, 'This was expected of you.'" He said, "And the Messenger of God, said, 'Fulfil, O my Lord! Your promise to me, because, if you wished (so), You would not be worshipped.'" (*al-Tafsīr*, *al-ʿAyyāshī*)

(2) al-Zamakhsharī has written: Three verses were revealed on the

1 A well known wide-leafed aromatic grass; it was used in thatching roofs, and was burned in place of firewood. (Trans.)

subject of intoxicants: *They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance, ...* (2:219). Some Muslims then left it and some continued to drink; until a man drank it, began his prayer, and talked nonsense. Then was revealed: *O you who believe! Do not go near prayer when you are intoxicated until you know (well) what you say, ...* (4:43). Still some Muslims continued drinking it; until ʿUmar drank it; then he took a jawbone of a camel and bashed with it the skull of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf, and then sat lamenting those (unbelievers) who were killed in the battle of Badr, reciting the poem of al-Aswad b. Yaghfūr:

How many spears (that is, braves) and noble drinkers are (thrown)
In the well—the well of Badr?[1]
How many nobles and feeders of humps are (there)
In the well—the well of Badr?
Does Ibn Abī Kabshah[2] threaten us that we shall be made alive again? And how can (happen) the life of ghosts and skulls?
Is he helpless in averting death from me?
And will raise me (again) when my bones become rotten? Well, who will convey my message to the Beneficent (God)
That I am abandoning the month of fast; So tell God to stop my drink from me,
And tell God to stop my food from me.

This (news) reached the Messenger of God and he came out enraged, dragging his cloak along; he raised something that was in his hand to strike him (ʿUmar). So he (ʿUmar) said, "I seek refuge in God from the wrath of God and the wrath of His Messenger." Then God, the Glorified, the Sublime, sent down (the verse): The Satan only desires to cause enmity and hatred ... Will you then desist? So ʿUmar said, "We desist." (Rabīʾ al-abrār)

(3) Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abu al-Shaykh, Ibn Marduwayh, and al-Naḥḥās (in his *al-Nāsikh*) have narrated from Saʾd b. Abī Waqqāṣ that he said, "Regarding me was revealed the

1 The Prophet had thrown after the battle of Badr the bodies of the seventy unbelievers who were killed therein. (Trans.)

2 The polytheists of Quraysh used this nickname for the Prophet in a sneering manner. (Trans.)

> prohibition of intoxicants. A man from the Helpers prepared a feast, and he invited us. People came to him, ate, and drank until they became intoxicated with liquor—and it was before the intoxicants were prohibited. So they began boasting. The Helpers said, 'The Helpers are superior;' and the Quraysh said, 'The Quraysh are superior.' Then a man came down with a jawbone of a camel and hit at my nose tearing it—and Sa'd's nose was torn." He said, "Then I came to the Prophet and mentioned it to him. So this verse was revealed: O you who believe! Intoxicants and games of chance ..." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: The traditions about the stories, which resulted in prohibition of intoxicants, are numerous, through the Sunnī chains, with great discrepancies among them. As for those traditions which mention some companions who had been drinking, we have no concern to go into them analyzing and sifting, because our purpose is to explain the Qur'anic verse. However, these narratives support what we have written in the Commentary that these verses imply, nay, rather clearly say, that a group of Muslims had not left drinking liquor since the verse, 2:219 was revealed until these verses of chapter five came down.

Of course, some traditions say that ʿAlī and ʿUthmān b. Maẓ'ūn had forbidden intoxicants to themselves before the verse of prohibition was revealed; and it has been mentioned in *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, that a few Arabs in the Era of Ignorance had forbidden intoxicants to themselves, and God helped some of them to find Islam and enter into its fold. Among them were ʿĀmir b. al-Zarīb al-'Udwānī and Qays b. ʿĀmir al-Tamīmī (who attained Islam). Also, among them were Ṣafwān b. Umayyah b. Muḥrith al-Kinānī, ʿAfīf b. Ma'dī Karb al-Kindī, al-Uslūm al-Yāmī (who forbade to himself both intoxicants and fornication). These few individuals were those on whose tongue the word of truth had appeared. Otherwise, generally the Arabs of that era like all other people of the world (except the Jews) were habituated to drink freely, until God forbade it in His Book.

It appears from the verses of the mighty Book that intoxicants were forbidden in Mecca before the *hijrah*, as is shown by the verse: *Say: "My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed, and sin and rebellion without justice ..."* (7:33). It is a Meccan verse; and when it is joined to the divine words: *They ask*

you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: "In both of them there is a great sin and (some) profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit." ... (2:219); which is Medinite verse revealed in early days of *hijrah*, there does not remain room for any doubt that at that time its prohibition was clear to the Muslims. And if we meditate on the context of the verses of the chapter 5, "The Table", and especially on the implications of the words: *Will you then desist?* And the verse: *There is no blame on those who believe and do good deeds for what they have eaten, when they fear Allah and believe it* will be clear that the indulgence of a group among them in drinking liquor between the revelation of chapter 2 and 5, was a residue of the previous bad habit. It was like some people's continuing to sinfully cohabit in the nights of Ramaḍān until God revealed: *It is made lawful to you on the night of fast to go in unto your wives; they are an apparel to you and you are an apparel for them; Allah knew that you were acting unfaithfully to yourselves, so He has turned to you (mercifully) and forgave you.* (2:187).

However, it is clear that these traditions invite two observations:

One: They differ among themselves concerning the date of the prohibition of intoxicants. The first narrative says that it was shortly before the battle of Uḥud (that is, the 3rd year of *hijrah*), while other reports say that it was after the battle of the Allies[1] (that is, the 5th year of *hijrah*). But it is not a big problem, because possibly the latter may be referring to the revelation of the verses of the chapter "The Table" in the 5th year of A.H.—although the wording of some of the traditions do not fully agree with it.

Two: They say that intoxicants were not prohibited before the revelation of the verse of "The Table", or that its prohibition was not clear before it for people and particularly for the companions. But the verse 33 of chapter 7, "The Battlements", clearly forbids sin, and the verse 219 of the chapter 2, "The Cow", clearly declares it to be a great sin; and these two declarations cannot be interpreted away.

Rather it looks far-fetched to think that prohibition of sin was revealed at Mecca before *hijrah*, in the verse which included a general summary of forbidden things, that is,: Say: "*My Lord has only prohibited indecencies, those of them that are apparent as well as those that are concealed, and sin and rebellion without justice, and that you associate with Allah that for which He*

1 It has been narrated by al-Ṭabarī in his *al-Tafsīr,* and by al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durru al-manthūr*, quoting al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Mundhir from Qatādah. (Auth.)

has not sent down any authority, and that you say against Allah what you do not know." (7:33), and then a long time would pass after it and neither the believers would ask its meaning from their Prophet, nor polytheists would seek from him its explanation, while their biggest concern was to refute the Book of God and object against it in any way they could imagine.

Rather the history shows that the Prophet's prohibition of the intoxicants like his forbidding polytheism and fornication was widely known to the polytheists. For the proof, look at the report given by Ibn Hishām in his *al-Sīrah*; quoting Khallād b. Qurrah and other learned elders of the tribe of Bakr b. Wāil that, A'shā b. Qays went forth towards the Messenger of God intending to accept Islam. He said a Qaṣīdah in praise of the Messenger of God, (which began with these lines):-

> Did not your eyes remain sore at night? And did you not spend the night awake like one bitten by snake?

When he reached Mecca—or was near it—some polytheists of Quraysh intercepted him and asked him his news. He told him that he had come intending to see the Messenger of God in order to enter into Islam. (The Qurayshite) said to him, "O Abū Baṣīr! He forbids fornication." A'shā said, "By God! Certainly, it is a thing that I have no desire of." The Qurayshite said, "O Abū Baṣīr! And he forbids intoxicants." A'shā said, "As for this, certainly there are some consolations about it in (my) soul; but I am going back and shall quench my thirst with it this year, then I'll come to him and accept Islam." So he returned, and died the same year and did not come back to the Messenger of God.

Thus, no weight remains at all for the above mentioned traditions. We can only say that the narrators had inferred them by their independent thinking on the verses, while they had forgotten the verse 7:33. The exegetes have offered strange interpretations with an aim to justify these traditions.[1]

However, after all this lengthy discourse, the net result remains that the Book of God had clearly announced prohibition of intoxicants in Islam before *hijrah*; and the only purpose of these verses of the chapter 5,

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1 One of them has said that the companions were interpreting the verse 2:219, Say: "In both of them there is a great sin ...", that it means pure sin. And this was in spite of the verse 7:33, which had clearly forbidden sin before it. (Auth.)

"The Table," was to put intense pressure on the people because they had not shown any seriousness in submitting to this divine prohibition and enforcing this law.

(4) Hishām narrates through a trustworthy person from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he was asked, "Is it true what has been narrated from you that intoxicants, set up stones and dividing arrows are men?" He said, "God was not to address His creatures in a language that they did not understand." (*al-Tafsīr*, al-ʿAyyāshī)

(5) ʿAbdullāh b. Sinān narrates from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said, Qudāmah b. Maẓ'ūn was brought before ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb; and he had drunk liquor and proof was established against him. (ʿUmar) asked ʿAlī (about it) and he ordered him to be flogged eighty stripes. Qudāmah said, "O Leader of the Faithful! There is no penalty for me; I am of the people of this verse: *There is no blame on those who believe and do good deeds for what they have eaten* (up to the end of the verse)." ʿAlī said to him, "You tell a lie; you are not from among the people of this verse. What its people had eaten, it was lawful for them; and they do not eat or drink except what is lawful for them." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: This meaning has also been narrated from Abu al-Rabī' from the same Imam. Also, al-Shaykh has narrated it in al-Tahdhīb through his chain from Ibn Sinān from the same Imam; and this meaning is narrated through the Sunnī chains too. The Imam's words, "What its people had eaten, it was lawful for them; and they do not eat or drink except what is lawful for them," agrees with what we have explained in the foregoing Commentary; so refer to it.

(6) al-Ṭabarī narrates from al-Sha'bī that he said, "Four verses were revealed about the intoxicants: They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance ... (2:219), so they left it; then was revealed: ... you obtain from them intoxication and goodly provision ... (16:67), so they drank it; then the two verses of "The Table" were revealed: *intoxicants and games of chances and ... Will you then desist?* (5:90–91). (*al-Tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī)

Author's comment: It appears from it that the verse 16:67 abrogated the verse 2:219, and this in its turn was abrogated by 5:90–91; this in itself is sufficient to show this claim's invalidity.

(7) (al-Kulaynī and al-Shaykh) have narrated through their chains from Abū Ja'far that he said, "God did never raise any prophet but it was in God's knowledge that when He would perfect his religion it would include prohibition of intoxicants; and intoxicants were always unlawful, but they are only carried away from (one) trait to (another) trait; and if it were imposed on them all together, it would have cut them off short of religion." (The narrator) said, "Abū Ja'far, said, 'There is no one more kind than God, the Sublime; and it is from His kindness (the Blessed, the Sublime) that He transfers them from (one) trait to (another) trait; and if He had imposed on them all together, they would have perished.'" (*al-Kāfī*; *al-Tahdhīb*)

(8) (al-Kulaynī) narrates through his chain from 'Amr b. Shimr from Abū Ja'far that he said, "When God, the Mighty, the Great, revealed to His Messenger, intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are only an abomination of the Satan's handiwork; shun it therefore, it was said to him, 'What is games of chance? O Messenger of God!' He said: 'Anything you make a bet with, even cubes and walnut.' It was said, 'Then what is stones set up?' He said, 'What they sacrifice to their deities.' It was said, 'Then what is arrows?' He said, 'Their arrows which they used for division (of meat).'" (*al-Kāfī*)

(9) (al-Kulaynī) narrates through his chain from 'Atā' b. Yasār from Abū Ja'far that he said, "The Messenger of God said, 'Every intoxicant is unlawful, and every intoxicant is liquor.'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: This tradition is narrated also through Sunnī chains, from 'Abdullāh b. 'Umar from the Prophet, and its wording is as follows, "Every intoxicant is liquor and every liquor is unlawful." al-Bayhaqī and others have narrated it too. There are numerous traditions narrated from the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt which are nearly *mutawātir* that every intoxicant is unlawful, and that whatever is used for betting on, is game of chance.

(10) Abu al-Ṣabāḥ narrates that he asked Abū 'Abdillāh about *nabīdh* and intoxicants, "Do they have the same position? (The Imam), said, 'No. Surely *nabīdh* is not of the rank of intoxicants. Certainly, God has prohibited intoxicants a little of it and more of it, as

He has prohibited dead body, blood and flesh of swine; and the Prophet has prohibited the intoxicant from among the drinks, and what the Messenger of God has prohibited, God has prohibited it.'" (*al-Tafsīr*, al-'Ayyāshī)

(11) (al-Kulaynī and al-Shaykh) have narrated through their chains from Mūsá b. Ja'far that he said, "Verily, God has not prohibited the liquor because of its name; but He has prohibited it because of its effect. Therefore, anything, which has the effect of liquor, is liquor." (In another version, the last sentence is, 'Therefore, anything which does the action of liquor is liquor.') (*al-Kāfī*; *al-Tahdhīb*)

Author's comment: The tradition in condemnation of intoxicants and gambling that has come through the Sunnī and Shī'ah chains are beyond the limit of enumeration; whoever wants to study them should consult the Collections of Traditions.

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Verses 94–99

The verses describe the law regarding the game of land and sea when a man is in the state of sanctity, wearing the robes of pilgrims.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لَيَبْلُوَنَّكُمُ اللَّهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الصَّيْدِ تَنَالُهُ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَرِمَاحُكُمْ لِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَن يَخَافُهُ بِالْغَيْبِ فَمَنِ اعْتَدَى بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٤﴾

(5:94) O you who believe! Allah will certainly try you in respect of some game which your hands and your lances can reach, that Allah might know who fears Him in secret; but whoever exceeds the limit after this, he shall have a painful punishment.

al-Balā' (test, trial); *layabluwannakum* (will certainly try you); *la* is for oath, which together with the doubling of 'n' connotes emphasis and intensity. The word: "some game", indicates insignificance, in order that it would help the audience to comply with the coming prohibition. The clause: "which your hands and your lances can reach," includes in its ambit game which can be caught easily by hand, like young birds, cubs of wild animals and eggs; or with difficulty like big games that usually cannot be hunted except with arms.

This verse apparently aims at paving the way for the severe law which follows in the next one; and that is the reason that this clause is followed by the words: *that Allah might know who fears Him in secret*; as it indicates that the ensuing law would be prohibitive; then comes the concluding statement: but whoever exceeds the limit after this he shall have a painful punishment.

that Allah might know who fears Him in secret: It is not unlikely that the divine words: "*God will certainly try you ... that God might know,*" allude to the fact that He will certainly foreordain it in order to distinguish those of you who fear God in secret from those who do not fear Him. Obviously, God is not afflicted by ignorance, which should be removed by knowledge! A full explanation of the meaning of test has been given

under the verse: *Do you think that you will enter the garden ...* (3:142), in the fourth volume of this book[1]; and also another meaning of knowledge was given earlier. As for the clause: "who fears Him in secret," the adverb: "in secret", is related to: "fears"; fearing in secret indicates that man fears his Lord and is cautious of the next world's punishment and its sufferings which the Lord has warned him of all those aspects that are unseen for man, and he does not perceive any part of it with his five senses. God says: *You can only warn him who follows the reminder and fears the Beneficent God in secret; ...* (36:11); *And the garden shall be brought near to those who guard* (*against evil*)*, not far off: This is what you were promised, for every one who turns frequently* (*to God*)*, keeps* (*his limits*)*; who fears the Beneficent God in secret and comes with a patient heart* (50:31–33); *Those who fear their Lord in secret and they are fearful of the hour* (21:49).

The clause: "but whoever exceeds the limit after this," means: Whoever exceeds the limit which God fixes for him after the said test and trial, shall have a painful chastisement.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لاَ تَقْتُلُواْ الصَّيْدَ وَأَنتُمْ حُرُمٌ وَمَن قَتَلَهُ مِنكُم مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاء مِّثْلُ مَا قَتَلَ مِنَ النَّعَمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ هَدْيًا بَالِغَ الْكَعْبَةِ أَوْ كَفَّارَةٌ طَعَامُ مَسَاكِينَ أَو عَدْلُ ذَلِكَ صِيَامًا لِّيَذُوقَ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَمَّا سَلَف وَمَنْ عَادَ فَيَنتَقِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْهُ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انتِقَامٍ ﴿٩٥﴾

(5:95) O you who believe! Do not kill game while you are in the pilgrim garb, and whoever among you shall kill it intentionally, the compensation (of it) is the like of what he killed, from the cattle, as two just persons among you shall judge, as an offering to be brought to the Ka'bah or the expiation (of it) is the feeding of the poor or the equivalent of it in fasting, that he may taste the unwholesome result of his deed; Allah has pardoned what is gone by; and whoever returns (to it), Allah will inflict retribution on him; and Allah is Mighty, Lord of Retribution.

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol.7. (Trans.)

al-ḥurum: This term describes someone in pilgrim garb. It's a unique adjective resembling a verb. (al-Ṭabrisī) writes: "*Ḥarām* and *muḥrim* mean the same thing, referring to someone in a state of sanctity, just like *ḥalāl* and *muḥill* are opposites and also share meanings. The act of entering into a sacred state, such as the time of Hajj or entering a holy sanctuary, is expressed by the word *aḥrama*. The term *al-Ḥarm* specifically refers to the pilgrim's clothing. For example, there's a saying about applying perfume to the Prophet for his *iḥrām* (ritual consecration). The root (*ḥ-r-m*) generally signifies protection or prohibition, like how women are referred to as *ḥaram*, meaning they are under protection, and *al-maḥrūm* describes someone who is deprived of sustenance."

He has also said: *Al-Mithl*, *al-mathal*, *al-shibh*, and *al-Shabah* all mean 'like' or 'likeness.'

He says: *al-Na'am* denotes camel, cow, sheep, and goat. However, it specifically refers to a camel when used alone. Cows, sheep, or goats, when mentioned separately, are not categorized under *al-Na'am*, as noted by al-Zajjāj.

Again he says: "Al-Farrā' explains that *al-'Adl* refers to something that equals another thing from a different species. *Al-'Idl*, on the other hand, means likeness or similarity, like having a slave or goat similar to someone else's. Baṣrite grammarians state that both *al-'adl* and *al-'idl* can mean 'like,' regardless of whether the items are of the same type.

Also, he has said: "*al-Wabāl* (translated here as 'the unwholesome result') means a heavy burden or hardship in an unpleasant situation; accordingly they say: *Ta'ām wabīl* and *mā' wabīl* when the food and water are heavy, not nourishing; thus God says: *... so We laid on him a violent hold* (73:16); that is, heavy and hard; and for this reason, the board of washerman is called *wabīl*."

The words: "*Do not kill game while you are in the pilgrim garb*," forbid the killing of game. But it is partially elaborated by the next verse: *Lawful to you is the game of the sea*—this explains the kind of game; and the nature of killing is elaborated by the next sentence: "and whoever among you shall kill it intentionally ..." The word: 'intentionally' is the circumstantial clause related to: "whoever among you shall kill it." Apparently, intentional killing is opposite of unintentional one, that is, killing without intention, e.g. one shoots arrow to a certain target, and it missing the target hits a game. The

verse makes it clear that he must pay the compensation if he did have the intention of killing the game, no matter whether he remembered that he was in the pilgrim garb, or had forgotten it or was oblivious to it.

The sentence: "the compensation (of it) is the like of what he killed, from the cattle, as two just persons among you shall judge, as an offering to be brought to the Ka'bah." Its meaning is clear: He has to offer a compensation, which should be like the game he has killed; it should be from a kind of cattle which is like the killed game; that similar cattle will be decided by two just religious persons among you; that offering should be brought to the Ka'bah and slaughtered in the sanctuary in Mecca or Minā, as explained by the Prophetic *sunnah*.

Grammatically the word: 'compensation' is a subject whose predicate is omitted (although this aspect is lost in English translation. Trans.). The clauses: "the like of what he killed, from the cattle," and, "two just persons ... shall judge," are descriptions of the compensation; the clauses: "an offering," and "to be brought to the Ka'bah," are the noun and its adjective, respectively, while the "offering" is the circumstantial clause related to "the compensation" as described above. The verse has been analyzed in some other ways too.

The clauses: "or the expiation (of it) is the feeding of the poor or the equivalent of it in fasting," lay down two other options for the expiation of killing a game. The particle, 'or', does not show more than mere alternativeness, and its elaboration comes from the *sunnah*; however, the verse, first names the feeding of the poor as its expiation, and then mention its equivalent fasting, and it is not without some indication of sequence between these alternatives.

The clause: "that he may taste the unwholesome result of his deed": The letter, l (that) indicates the objective; this and the preceding sentences to which it is attached, show that it is a kind of retribution.

Allah has pardoned what is gone by; and whoever returns** (**to it**), **Allah will inflict retribution on him; and Allah is Mighty, Lord of Retribution: Pardon is bestowed to what is gone by. It shows that "what is gone by" refers to those game killings, which had occurred before the verse was revealed giving this law. Obviously, if pardon was to apply to the game killed when it was being revealed or after its revelation, it would contradict the law. This sentence was revealed to remove the possible

misunderstanding that the law of compensation was retroactively applicable to the incidents preceding the time of revelation.

The verse proves that pardon may be applied to such deeds too which are not sins, provided those deeds contain evil, which by their nature would be liable to attract legislative prohibition. The clauses: "and whoever returns (to it), God will inflict retribution on him; and God is Mighty, Lord of Retribution." Apparently, returning to it means repeating the sin, and the clause: "God will inflict retribution on him," speaks about future recurrence, not to a present order. It shows that the returning means repeating the deed that had attracted compensation, and the divine retribution refers to something other than the imposed compensation.

In this backdrop, the verse, together with the preceding and the following ones, deals with various aspects of the law of killing the game. God has pardoned those who had done so before revelation of the law; but he who would kill a game after law was promulgated, would have to offer in compensation cattle like of what he had killed—this is for the first offence. However, if he repeats the sin, God will inflict retribution on him, and there is no compensation on him. This is seen in most of the traditions of the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt which deal with the explanation of this verse.

Had not this explanation been given in traditions, we would have to say that the retribution, mentioned in the clause: "God will inflict retribution," covered general laws including expiation; and the returning connoted killing a game again; it would then mean: Whoever indulged in killing a game as they were doing before promulgation of this law—that is, whoever would kill a game—God would inflict retribution on him—that is, would make him liable to pay the compensation/expiation. But, as you see, this meaning is far from the wording of the verse.

أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ وَطَعَامُهُ مَتَاعًا لَّكُمْ وَلِلسَّيَّارَةِ وَحُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَرِّ مَا دُمْتُمْ حُرُمًا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

(5:96) Lawful to you is the game of the sea and its food, a provision for you and for the travellers, and the game of the land is forbidden to you so long as you are in the pilgrim garb, and fear Allah, to Whom you shall be gathered.

All these verses aim at describing the law of hunting (intentionally,

while the hunter is in *iḥrām*) on land or in sea. It proves that what is made lawful in this verse is hunting the game of the sea, not (only) its eating; in this context, the word, *ṭa'āmuhu* (which can be translated as, its food, or its eating) gives here the meaning of food, and not of eating; and it means that you are allowed to eat from the game of the sea. In short, the verse says that you are allowed to hunt the game of the sea, and also to eat from what you have hunted.

The seafood covers what is hunted from it, like good meat of the game, as well as what is thrown up by sea like a dead animal, etc. However, the traditions of the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt explain it as good meat of game, salted or otherwise.

The words: "a provision for you and for the travellers," is a circumstantial clause related to "the game of sea and its food." It contains a shade of bestowal of gracious boon.

The verse is addressed to the believers who are in condition of iḥrām; therefore the clause: "a provision for you and for the travelers," may be translated as, a provision for those in the condition of iḥrām and for others.

It should be noted that there are numerous topics of jurisprudence contained in these verses, which are written in detail in the books of fiqh; and whoever wants to know more should refer to those books.

جَعَلَ اللَّهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيَامًا لِّلنَّاسِ وَالشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَالْهَدْيَ
وَالْقَلَائِدَ ذَٰلِكَ لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٧﴾

(5:97) Allah has made the Ka'bah, the Sacred House, a sanctuary for the people, and the sacred month and the offerings and the (animals with the) garlands; this is that you may know that Allah knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and that Allah is the Knower of all things.

The talk begins with the Ka'bah, which is followed by its explicative apposition the Sacred House; then month is described with the attribute, the sacred, which is followed by the offerings and the animals with garlands, which in their turn are related to the sanctity of the House. All this shows that the essential prerequisite of this verse's topic is Sanctity.

Qiyām (that with which something stands). al-Rāghib has said: "*al-Qiyām* and *al-Qawām* is the name of that with which a thing stands, that is, remains firm; like *al-'imād* (pillar) and *al-sinād* (prop) which are used for that with which a thing remains upright; as God says: *And do not give away your property which Allah has made for you a* (*means of*) *support to the weak of understanding* ... (4:5), that is, He has made it for you a means to keep you upright; and He says: *Allah has made the Ka'bah, the Sacred House, a support for the people*, that is, it provides their means of support in this life and in the hereafter;[1] al-Aṣamm has said: '(It means), firmly standing which will not be abrogated. It has an alternative version, *qayyiman*, with the same meaning.'"

The verse basically means that God has made the Ka'bah a sacred house and laid down its sanctity. Also, He has made some months sacred, and joined them together in some respects, like the *ḥajj* which is done in the sacred month of Dhi 'l-Ḥijjah. He has also ordained something connected to it, which share in this sanctity like sacrificial animals (marked as such by cutting off a piece of their ears, or putting garlands on their necks). All this has been prescribed as a means of support for the people's blissful social life.

So, He has prescribed the Sacred House as the *qiblah*, towards which the people face in their prayers, keep to it the faces of their dead bodies and slaughtered animals, and maintain its respect in their shameful conditions (that is, they do not face it while evacuating the bowels). In this way their community is united and their ties are strengthened; their religion is revived and maintained; they come to it for *ḥajj* from different lands and furthest regions, and therein witness advantages for themselves and proceed on the path of servitude. The people throughout the world get guidance by the Ka'bah's name, by its remembrance and by looking at it. They seek divine nearness through it and by fixing their attention to it. God has described its excellence in another way which is not far from above, as He says: *Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakkah, blessed and a guidance for the nations* (3:96). And you have seen a discourse in volume three of this book, under this verse, which illuminates this subject.[2]

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1 We have translated the key word, *qiyāman*, as sanctuary, because in this context it means refuge, safety, and peace. (Trans.)

2 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol. 6. (Trans.)

Similar is the case of the sacred month, inasmuch as it is a sanctuary for men. God has forbidden fighting in it, and has therein given them safety and security in their lives, honor and properties so that they get a chance to mend what had gone bad in the affairs of their lives. The position of sacred month within all months is like a station where a wayfarer—weary and tired—gets an opportunity to rest and restore himself. In short, the sacred house and the sacred month with the sacrificial animals connected with them are a means of support for the people, encompassing various aspects of their lives here and in the hereafter. If a deep thinking meditator reflects comprehensively on the particulars of the benefits which the people acquire from the Ka'bah and the sacred month—the benefits that are ever flowing or firmly fixed—he will get enormous blessings and will be highly amazed: He will see that because of the sacred house and sacred month, blood relationships are strengthened, friendships are fortified, wealth is gladly spent on needy and poor; markets flourish, mutual love between near relatives blossoms, and strangers recognize each other; hearts come nearer, souls become purified and powers are revitalized; the community gets support from one another, religion is revived, and standards of truth and banners of monotheism are raised high.

It seems this fact is mentioned here after the verses forbidding the game in order to remove any misgiving that these laws were of little or no benefit at all. What is the benefit of forbidding hunting in a certain place or time? What is the advantage of bringing sacrificial animals to a fixed area? And so on. Were not these laws merely vestiges of the superstitious rites of the ignorant and barbaric nations?

This doubt was removed here by saying that the dignity of the sacred house and the sacred month and related rules are based on an academic reality and serious basis, that is, they are the means of support for their lives.

This explanation shows how the verse: "*this is that you may know that God knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and that God is the Knower of all things*," is connected with the preceding verses. The demonstrative pronoun: "this" may point to the law described in the preceding verses (the underlying reason of whose legislation is explained in the sentence: "God has made the Ka'bah ...''). In this case the meaning will be as follows: Verily God has made the sacred house and the sacred month sanctuaries for the people and has laid down relevant laws, in order

that by preserving their sanctity, obeying the laws enacted about them, the people may proceed to the realization that God knows what is in the heavens and the earth, and is fully cognizant of what is beneficial for them; that is why He has laid down for you these laws with full knowledge. There is no superstition involved in these laws that could have emanated from delusive imagination.

Alternatively, that pronoun (this) may be pointing to the explanation of the law which is elaborated in the sentence: "God has made the Ka'bah ..." In this case, the meaning will be as follows: We have explained to you this reality (that is, making the sacred house and the sacred month and their related affairs as sanctuaries for the people) in order that you may understand that God fully knows what is in the heavens and in the earth and the related laws which are beneficial to their affairs.

Therefore, you should not think that these laid down laws were useless and ineffectual, or were based on superstition.

اعْلَمُواْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٩٨﴾ مَّا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ
إِلاَّ الْبَلاغُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

(5:98–99) Know that Allah is severe in requiting (evil) and that Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. Nothing is (incumbent) on the Messenger but to deliver (the message), and Allah knows what you reveal and what you hide.

It reinforces the preceding declarations and firmly establishes the ground of the above mentioned laws; it threatens disobedient persons and offers (good) promise to obedient ones. The both clauses have a shade of threatening; that is why God has described Himself first as being severe in punishment and then has mentioned His forgiveness and mercy. Also, it is for this reason that the talk has ended with the sentences: "*Nothing is* (*incumbent*) *on the Messenger ... and what you hide.*"

Examining Narrations

(1) (al-Kulaynī) narrates through his chains from Ḥammād b. Jesus and Ibn Abī ʿUmayr, from Muʾāwiyah b. ʿAmmār, from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said in explanation of the words of God, the Mighty, the Great: *Allah will certainly try you in respect of some*

game which your hands and your lances can reach. "Wild animals were crowded for the Messenger of God, in the ʿumrah of Ḥudaybiyyah until their hands and their lances could reach them." (*al-Kāfī*)

Author's comment: Also, al-ʿAyyāshī has narrated it as a *mursal* tradition from Muʾāwiyah b. ʿAmmār; and this theme has been narrated by al-Kulaynī and al-Shaykh (in *al-Kāfī* and al-Tahdhīb, respectively) through their chains to al-Ḥalabī from al-Ṣādiq. al-ʿAyyāshī has also narrated it from Samāʿah from the same Imam, as a *mursal* one; and similarly al-Qummī has narrated it as a *mursal*; this is also narrated from Muqātil b. Ḥayyān as quoted below.

(2) (al-Suyūṭī says:) Ibn Abī Ḥātim has narrated from Muqātil b. Ḥayyān that he said: "This verse was revealed in the *ʿumrah* of Ḥudaybiyyah; wild animals, birds and games used to come to them in their stations like of which they had never seen in the past; so God forbade them to kill it while they were in the condition of *iḥrām*; so that He might know who fears Him in secret." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: These two traditions do not go against what we have written in the Commentary that the verse's meaning is general.

(3) (al-Kulaynī) narrates through his chains from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, about the words of God, the Blessed, the Sublime: which your hands and your lances can reach; he said, "What the hands can reach are eggs and nestlings, and what the lances can reach refers to what cannot be caught by hands." (*al-Kāfī*)

(4) (al-Ayyāshī) narrates, through his chains in his *al-Tafsīr*, from Ḥarīz, from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said, "If a *muḥrim* (one in the condition of *iḥrām*) kills a pigeon, then in it (its expiation) is a goat; if he kills a bird chick, then in it is a camel; and if he sets foot on an egg and breaks it, then on him is one dirham, all these (expiations) shall be given in *ṣadaqah* at Mecca and Minā; and this is (the meaning of) the word of God in His Book: *Allah will certainly try you in respect of some game which your hands will reach*—eggs and chicks—and your lances—big mothers."

Author's comment: al-Shaykh has narrated it in *al-Tahdhīb*, from Ḥarīz from the same Imam, giving only its last section.

(5) al-Shaykh narrates through his chains from Ibn Abī ʿUmayr, from Ḥammād, from al-Ḥalabī, from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said, "When a *muḥrim* kills a game, then its compensation is (incumbent) on him, and the (killed) game will be given to a poor as *ṣadaqah*; then if he repeats and kills another game, there is no compensation on him, and God will inflict retribution on him, and (that) retribution (will be) in the next world." (*al-Tahdhīb*)

(6) (al-Shaykh) narrates from al-Kulaynī, from Ibn Abī ʿUmayr, from some of his companions, from Abū ʿAbdillāh, that he said: "If a *muḥrim* kills a game by mistake, then compensation is incumbent on him;then if he kills it again intentionally, then he is from those on whom God will inflict retribution, and he is not liable to pay expiation." (*ibid.*)

(7) (al-Shaykh) narrates from Ibn Abī ʿUmayr, from Muʾāwiyah b. ʿAmmār, that he said, "I said to Abū ʿAbdillāh, 'A *muḥrim* has killed a game?' He said, 'He has to give its expiation.' I said, 'Then if he repeats?' He said, 'He has to give expiation whenever he repeats.'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: As you see, the traditions differ one from another; and al-Shaykh has reconciled them by saying that they mean: 'If a *muḥrim* intentionally kills a game it is incumbent on him to give expiation; and if he intentionally repeats then there is no expiation on him and he is among those on whom God will inflict retribution; and as for him who kills forgetfully, he has to give expiation whenever he repeats.'

(8) (al-Shaykh) narrates through his chains from Zurārah from Abū Jaʾfar about the words of God, the Mighty, the Great: as two just persons among you shall judge. "So the just is the Messenger of God, and the Imam after him, who shall judge, and he is just. So, when you have known what God has ordered from the Messenger of God and the Imam, then it is sufficient for you and you should not ask (others) about it." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: There are several traditions of this meaning; one of which says, "I recited near Abū ʿAbdillāh, '*dhawā ʿadlin minkum*' (two just persons among you); he said, '*dhū ʿadlin minkum*' (just person among you); it is among the mistakes of the scribes. And it returns to variations of recital, as is apparent."

(9) (al-Kulaynī) narrates from al-Zuhrī from ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, that he said, "Fast in compensation of game is obligatory; God, the Mighty, the Great, has said: and whoever among you shall kill it intentionally, the compensation (of it) is the like of what he killed, from the cattle, as two just persons among you shall judge, as an offering to be brought to the Ka'bah or the expiation (of it) is the feeding of the poor or the equivalent of it in fasting. Well, do you know how will the equivalent of it in fasting be? O Zuhrī!" (Zuhrī) says, "I said, 'I do not know.' He said, 'The (price of) the game will be assessed; then that price will be broken up on wheat (that is, it will be seen how much wheat may be bought with that price); then the wheat will be measured in *ṣā'* (equivalent of 3 kg.), and he will fast one day for each half a *ṣā'*.'" (*al-Kāfī*)

(10) (al-Kulaynī) narrates through his chains from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad from one of his men, from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said, "Whoever is obligated to offer a sacrifice in his iḥrām, he is free to slaughter it wherever he wishes, except the compensation of game, because God says: an offering brought to the Ka'bah." (*ibid.*)

(11) al-ʿAyyāshī narrates from Ḥarīz, from Abū ʿAbdillāh that he said about the words: Lawful to you is the game of the sea and its food, a provision for you and for the travelers. "Its salty one, which they eat." (And he said:) "Distinguish between the two: Every bird that lives in thickets, lays egg in land and brings up its chick on land is a game of land; and whatever bird lives in land, and lays egg in sea and bring up its chick (there) is among the game of the sea." (*al-Tafsīr*)

(12) (al-ʿAyyāshī narrates) from Zayd al-Shaḥḥām that he said, "I asked Abū ʿAbdillāh, about the word of God: *Lawful to you is the game of the sea and its food, a provision for you and for the travellers*; he said, 'It is salty fish; also whatever you take from it as supply, even if it is not salty, it is provision.'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: There are numerous traditions of this meaning narrated through Shī'ah chains from the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt.

(13) (al-Suyūṭī) quotes Ibn Abī Shaybah from Mu'āwiyah b. Qurrah and Aḥmad, from a man of the Helpers, "Verily a camel of a man

trode a nest of an ostrich and broke its eggs. So the Messenger of God said, '(Incumbent) on you is fast of one day in lieu of every egg, or feeding of poor.'" (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: He has also narrated this theme from Ibn Abī Shaybah, from ʿAbdullāh b. Dhakwān, from the Prophet; and has also narrated it from Abu al-Zināḍ, from ʿĀishah from the Prophet.

(14) Abu al-Shaykh and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated through the chain of Abu al-Muhzim, from the Prophet that he said, "In the eggs of ostrich it is (incumbent to pay) its price." (*ibid.*)

(15) Also, he quotes Ḥātim from Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. ʿAlī: A man asked ʿAlī about sacrificial animal, from what it is (that is, from which species it should be). He said, "From the eight pairs." Then it seemed as if the man had some doubts; so ʿAlī said, "Do you read Qur'an?" It seemed as if the man said, "Yes." (ʿAlī) said, "Then have you heard God saying: *O you who believe! Fulfil the covenants. The cattle quadrupeds are made lawful for you* ... (5:1)." He said, "Yes." (ʿAlī) said, "Have you heard Him saying: ... *and mention the name of Allah during stated days over what He has given them of the cattle quadrupeds* ... (22:28); *And of the cattle (He created) beasts of burden and those which are fit for slaughter only;* ... (6:142)?" He said, "Yes." (ʿAlī) said, "And have you heard Him saying: ... *two of sheep and two of goats* ... (6:143)? *And two of camels and two of cows* ... (6:144)?" He said, "Yes." (ʿAlī) said, "And have you heard Him saying: O you who believe! Do not kill game while you are in the pilgrim garb ... as an offering to be brought to the Ka'bah?" The man said, "Yes." Then (ʿAlī) said, "If I killed a deer, then what is (incumbent) on me?" He said, "A goat." ʿAlī said, "An offering to be brought to the Ka'bah?" The man said, "Yes." Then ʿAlī said, "God has named it: to be brought to the Ka'bah, as you hear." (*ibid.*)

(16) Ibn Abī Ḥātim narrates from ʿAṭā' al-Khurāsānī that ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭab, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, Ibn ʿAbbās, Zayd b. Thābit and Mu'āwiyah had judged that if a *muḥrim* kills a game for which an offering is given in compensation, the price of that offering should be assessed and poor persons fed from it. (*ibid*).

(17) Ibn Jarīr has narrated from Abū Hurayrah that he said, "The

Messenger of God, said, 'Lawful to you is the game of the sea and its food, a provision for you.' He said, 'Whatever dead animals it throws (on the shore), it is its food.'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: Similar themes have been narrated from some companions too; but what is narrated from the chains of Ahl al-Bayt contradicts it, as described earlier.

(18) (al-'Ayyāshī) narrates from Abān b. Taghlib that he said, "I said to Abū 'Abdillāh, 'What is the meaning of: God has made the Ka'bah, the Sacred House, a sanctuary for the people?' He said, 'Livelihood.'" (*al-Tafsīr*)

Author's comment: The explanation of this tradition has been given earlier.

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Verse 100

The verse seems as if it is independent and complete in itself, because its connection with the preceding and the following verses is not clear. Therefore, one should not needlessly strive to seek its connection with foregoing verses. It only explains a universal parable God has used to describe a characteristic which distinguishes the True Religion from other prevalent religions and customs: That consideration and respect belongs to the Truth even if the people adhering to it are few and its band scattered; that one should rely on good and bliss even if majority has turned away from it and powerful people have forgotten it. It is because Truth does not rely in its intrinsic values except on sound reason; and far be it from the sound reason to lead to other than the good of human society—the good which supports man in the affairs of life and means of pleasant livelihood, no matter whether it agrees with majority's desires or not (and often it goes against majority's wishes!). So it is this system prevalent in creation, and it is the basis of correct views and opinions; it does never follow their desires, and if the Truth were to follow their desires, the heavens and the earth would perish.

قُلْ لَا يَسْتَوِي الْخَبِيثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الْخَبِيثِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

(5:100) Say: "The bad and the good are not equal, though the abundance of the bad may enchant you;" so fear Allah, O men of understanding, that you may be successful.

Apparently, inequality of the bad and the good means that the good is better than the bad. It is a very clear idea; therefore the speech must be an allusion to some deeper factor: The good by it very nature enjoys a higher status than the bad; now if we suppose the opposite, that because of some accidental development, the bad becomes better than the good, it would mean that the bad had gradually risen and ascended the stairs until it reached a step where it became level with the good in rank and status,

before surpassing it and gaining ascendancy over it. So, when equality between them is negated, it more clearly and forcefully would negate the idea of the bad being better than the good.

It also makes it clear why "the bad" has been placed in this verse before "the good." It is because the speech aims at showing that abundance of the bad does not make it better than the good; and it could only happen if the bad rose from the abyss of vileness and meanness to the height of nobility and glory until it became level with the good in its position and then ascended higher. If the speaker were to say: 'The good and the bad are not equal,' then the motive would be to show that the good cannot be more vile and mean than the bad, and in that case it should have mentioned smallness of the good in place of abundance of the bad. Understand it.

Goodness and badness are two real attributes for real things found outside imagination, like good/bad food, good/bad land. God says: *And as for good land, its vegetation springs forth* (*abundantly*) *by the permission of its Lord, and* (*as for*) *that which is bad* (*its herbage*) *comes forth but scantily* ... (7:58); ... *and the good provisions?* (7:32). If at any time, goodness and badness are used for any type of subjective approach or situation, like good/bad judgement or good/bad behavior, then it is based on a sort of consideration.

However, in this speech, the clauses: *so fear Allah, O men of understanding, that you may be successful*, have branched out from, "The bad and the good are not equal ..." and fear of God or piety results from action or inaction, while its goodness and badness emanate from metaphorical consideration; and the sentence: "The bad and the good are not equal," is taken as a well accepted principle; all these factors together offer the strongest proof that goodness and badness here connote the real things outside imagination—only then the proof will be successful. If on the other hand, it were to describe good and bad and behavior, the meaning would not be so clear, because every community believes that its system is the good one and what goes against its wishes and opposes its desires is bad.

Therefore, the speech is based on another meaning which God has described in various places in His Book; that is, the religion is based on nature and creation, and what the religion invites to is the life that is good, and what it forbids is the bad; that God has not made lawful except the good things, and has not forbidden except the bad things. God says: *Then*

set your face upright for religion in natural devotion (*to truth*)*; the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion, ...* (30:30); *... and makes lawful to them the good things and makes unlawful to them impure things, ...* (7:157); *Say: "Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants and the good provisions?" ...* (7:32).

It comes out from above that the sentence: "The bad and the good are not equal, though the abundance of the bad may enchant you," is a parable to show that religious laws, which are based on the things' good or bad inherent attributes, do affect the human bliss and misery; that they do not vary because of smallness or abundance; the good is good even it is in small quantity, and the bad is bad even it is in abundance.

Thus it is incumbent on every man of understanding to distinguish the bad from the good, and to decide that the good is better than the bad. He must realize that man is obligated to exert himself to make his life blissful, and to opt for the good against the bad; he must fear God, his Lord, and proceed on His path. He should not be deceived when he sees the multitude of the people addicted to heinous deeds and perilous characteristics and conditions; base desires should not turn him away from following the truth, and fear or favor should not influence him in anyway. Probably then he will succeed in attaining the human bliss.

... so fear Allah, O men of understanding, that you may be successful: It branches out from the preceding parable. The meaning: Piety and fear of God are connected with divine *sharī'ah*, which in its turn is based on creative good and bad for looking after the interest of the man's bliss and success; and no man of reason can entertain any doubt about it. Therefore, O men of understanding! It is incumbent on you to fear God by acting on His *sharī'ah*, in order that you may be successful.

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Verses 101–102

The two verses clearly have no connection with the preceding ones, and their meaning does not require any relation with any previous talk for clarification of any of their part. Therefore, there is no need for the over-exertion and the mental gymnastic which many exegetes have indulged into to discover the verses' connection with the theme preceding ones, or with the beginning of the chapter, or with its; so it is better to ignore it altogether.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ لاَ تَسْأَلُواْ عَنْ أَشْيَاء إِن تُبْدَ لَكُمْ تَسُؤْكُمْ وَإِن تَسْأَلُواْ عَنْهَا حِينَ يُنَزَّلُ الْقُرْآنُ تُبْدَ لَكُمْ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهَا وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ قَدْ سَأَلَهَا قَوْمٌ مِّن قَبْلِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَصْبَحُواْ بِهَا كَافِرِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

(5:101–102) O you who believe! Do not put questions about things which if declared to you may trouble you, and if you question about them while the Qur'an is being revealed, they shall be declared to you; Allah has pardoned of this, and Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing. A people before you indeed asked such questions, and then became disbelievers in them.

al-Ibdā' (to declare, to disclose); *sā'ahu* is opposite of *sarrahu* (it pleased him).

The verse forbids the believers to put questions about such things, which may pain and displease them if disclosed. It has left it vague who was the person asked from. But the sentence: "if you question about them while the Qur'an is being revealed," as well as the next verse: *A people before you indeed asked such questions, then became disbelievers on account of them,* clearly show that it is the Prophet who is intended here—that the believers should not put such questions to him which would result in such and such. However, the underlying reason of this prohibition conveys the idea that it covers also other situations; that it forbids man to enquire about, and search, the things God has left vague and put a veil on them which cannot be removed by normal means and usual ways. Obviously, there is

a strong chance of misery and perdition if one were to acquire somehow the knowledge of such realities as, for example, the date when he would die, the cause of his death, the lifespan of his near and dear ones, the fall of his kingdom and honor; probably the very knowledge might cause his perdition or misery.

The system of life has been streamlined by God and implemented by Him in the world. He has disclosed some things and put veil on the others. He has not made open what He has but for an underlying reason; and has not hidden what He has but for an underlying reason. Therefore, to cause hiding of what is apparent or to disclose what is hidden would disrupt the system, which covers the universe. It is not unlike the human life based on the body system which is made up of various powers, organs and limbs—if one of it is removed from, or added to it, a major function of life would be lost, and may be at times the life itself—or its meaning—will be ruined.

The second factor, which the verse has left vague, is the nature of the things about which they are forbidden to ask. It only describes them as being such that they may pain or trouble you if they are disclosed. There is no doubt that the words: "which if declared to you may trouble you," are the attribute of the preceding word: "things." It is a conditional sentence that shows that if the condition takes place, its concomitant is bound to take place. As those things were of such a nature that if disclosed they would certainly trouble them; therefore, putting questions about them and seeking to unearth their hidden affairs was tantamount to asking to be troubled and pained.

Objection: A sane person does not seek that which would give him pain or put him in trouble. Therefore, it would have been better if the prohibition was rephrased, for example: do not put question about things that contain factors which if disclosed to you may trouble you. Or, do not put questions about things which you are not sure would not trouble you if disclosed to you.

Someone has replied to it in a really strange way. He has said: "It is established in the Arabic grammar that the particle, *in* (if) describes a condition which is not certain to take place, to appear; and the concomitant follows the condition in coming into existence or not coming; as Qur'an has used in, and not *idhā* (if, when) (which gives a shade of certainty), it proves that mere possibility of its disclosure being troublesome, is sufficient

to forbid putting questions about it."

Comment: He has clearly erred in this reply. Would that I knew which rule of the Arabic grammar has said that a condition followed by in was not sure to take place; and that consequently its concomitant too was not certain to come into being. What does it mean when we say: 'If (in) you come to me I'll bestow honor upon you?' Doesn't it mean that if you came you'll certainly be bestowed honor upon? Therefore, his view that, mere possibility of its disclosure being troublesome is sufficient to forbid putting questions about it, could hold water only if the verse had forbidden asking about things which could possibly trouble them if disclosed. But as you already know the fact is different; it forbids putting question about things, which were definitely going to trouble them if disclosed. So the objection remains unanswered.

Another Reply: Similar in weakness is another view, based on some traditions, that the: "things which if declared to you may trouble you," points to those unseen things which some people appear eager to know, like dates of deaths, final result of many affairs, flow of the good and the bad, and avidity to unearth the hidden destiny, which by nature is not free from what gives pain to man; for example, when a man asks how many years have remained in his life, how will he die, what will be his end result, who was his father and so on; and such questions were usually asked in the Era of Ignorance. Therefore, the verse forbids them to put questions about such things; because usually such disclosures may expose informations which may afflict man with pain and grief; for example, that his death is nearer, or that his end is disastrous, or that his real father is someone other than the one he is affiliated to. These are the things which usually throw man in trouble and sorrow; and there was a possibility that if questions about them were put to the Prophet, he would answer them with what would not please the questioner, and arrogance and pride might push him to refute the words of the Prophet and become a disbeliever, as the next verse points to it: A people before you indeed asked such questions, and then became disbelievers on account of them.

Comment: Although this interpretation seems perfect at the first glance, yet it does not agree with the divine words: *and if you question about them while the Qur'an is being revealed, they shall be declared to you*—whether we say that this verse permits such questions at the time of

the revelation of Qur'an, or that it emphatically forbids it at that time by pointing to the fact that at other times the replier, that is, the Prophet has the option of not replying to such questions, keeping in view the wellbeing of the questioners; but such things are in fact unveiled before his eyes, their reality is known to him from the beginning; therefore you should not ask about them while the Qur'an is being revealed.

As for its disagreement with the first meaning, it is because the questions about such things, by their nature, entail scandals; therefore, there is no sense in saying that such questioning is allowed while the Qur'an is being revealed, as the scandal will remain even then.

As for its being unfit with the second meaning, it is accepted that the time of the revelation of Qur'an was the time of disclosure and unveiling for those things which needed to be disclosed and unveiled; yet this especially was reserved to realities of cognition and the laws of do's and don'ts, and related affairs. However, fixing the age of Zayd, disclosing how 'Amr will die, identifying who was that man's father and things like that have no connection at all with the Qur'anic descriptions. In this backdrop, there appears no reason why the prohibition of putting questions about such things should be followed by the clause: "and if you question about them while the Qur'an is being revealed, they shall be declared to you."

Therefore, the more appropriate reply is the one inferred from some other persons' talk that: The next verse: *A people before you indeed asked such questions, and then became disbelievers on account of them,* as well as the clause: "and if you question about them while the Qur'an is being revealed, they shall be declared to you," show that the things questioned about were connected with the laid down laws; the verses discourage and forbid the believers to seek minute details regarding those laws, because too much interrogation and too deep delving in questions would certainly lead to harder details and put the questioners in greater troubles, as God has described in the story of the cow of the Israelites. The more they indulged in enquiry, asking for more and more particulars of the cow which they were told to slaughter the more God went on tightening the conditions and narrowing their choices.

The clause: "God has pardoned of this," is apparently an independent sentence, put here to explain the reason of the prohibition: "do not put question about things which if declared to you may trouble you."

Some exegetes have said: The clause: "God has pardoned of this," is the attribute of "things"; and the speech has to be rearranged as follows: do not put questions about things, which God has pardoned, which if declared to you may trouble you.

Comment: This interpretation is not correct; the verb: *'afā* (pardoned) has taken the preposition: 'an, and it is the best proof that the things pardoned are those which are related to *sharī'ah* and laws; had they been from among the creative affairs, it was almost certain to be described as, God has pardoned this.

In any case, the reasoning in terms of pardoning, indicates that the word: "things" refers to the particulars of the laws and *sharī'ah*, and the conditions pertaining to them; and makes it clear that if the Qur'an is silent about them, it is not because God was unmindful of them or had neglected them; it is but a concession from God to His servant which He has bestowed on them to make their lives easier; as He says (at the end of the verse): "And God is Forgiving, Forbearing." When they put questions asking for an order's particulars, they make themselves liable to more hardship, to further tightening—and it is bound to afflict them with pain and grief as in this way they reject the divine pardon which was offered to them to make life easy to them, and to affirm the divine attributes of forgiveness and forbearance.

The theme of the verse may be expressed in our words as follows: 'O you who believe! Do not ask the Prophet about the things regarding which the *sharī'ah* is silent, God has pardoned them and has not spoken about them in order to make your life easy and free from burden; because they are such that if you ask about them while the Qur'an is being revealed, they shall be declared to you, and they will put you in trouble and pain if they are disclosed to you.'

The above discourse has made it clear that:

The divine words: "*and if you question about them while the Qur'an is being revealed, they shall be declared to you*," are the ending part of the prohibition, as has been explained; they are not intended to erase the prohibition of questioning at the time when the Qur'an is being revealed, as some people have thought.

The clause: "God has pardoned of it," is an independent sentence, put here to give the reason of the prohibition of the questioning; it thus

gives the benefit of adjective, although grammatically it is not an adjective.

The speech ends with the clause: "*and God is Forgiving, Forbearing*," although the speech contains prohibition which does not agree with the attributes of forgiveness and forbearance. Therefore these two attributes are related to the pardon mentioned in the clause: "God has pardoned of it," and not to the prohibition contained in the verse.

A people before you indeed asked such questions, and they became disbelievers on account of them: It is said that *sa'alahu* and *sa'ala 'anhu* have the same meaning: He asked about him; *thumma* (then) indicates delay in terms of speaking, not in terms of time; *bihā* (in them) is connected with, disbelievers, as the verse apparently shows; it is intended to forbid putting questions concerning the conditions of laws and orders which were left vague at the time of legislation. Thus, the disbelief here indicates disbelief in the laws as it entails diffidence of soul and straitness of hearts against their acceptance.

There is also a possibility that *bi* in it may be used to show the cause; then the meaning will be: on account of it; but this is a farfetched idea.

Although the verse has not named the people who had turned disbelievers, yet there are some episodes mentioned in the Qur'an to which the verse may be applied, like that of the table (among the Christians' stories) and several others related to the *ummah* of Moses and others.

Examining Narrations

(1) (al-Suyūṭī) quotes Ibn Jarīr, Abu al-Shaykh and Ibn Marduwayh who have narrated from Abū Hurayrah that he said, "The Messenger of God, delivered a sermon before us, and said, 'O people! God has prescribed *ḥajj* for you.' 'Ukāshah b. Muḥṣin stood up and said, 'Every year? O Messenger of God!' (The Prophet) said, 'As for it, if I had said, "Yes," it would have become obligatory; and if it had become obligatory and then you were to leave it, you would have gone astray. Remain silent before me when I am silent before you, as those who were before you had perished only because of their questioning and their discord against their prophets.' Then God revealed: O you who believe! Do not put questions about things which if declared to you may trouble you ..." (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: This story has been narrated by several narrators from Abū Hurayrah and Abū Amāmah, etc.; and it has been narrated in *Majma' al-bayān* and other Shī'ite books. It fits on the explanation that we have written earlier.

(2) (al-Suyūṭī) quotes Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim who have narrated from al-Suddī about the word of God: *O you who believe! Do not put questions about things which if declared to you ...*, that he said, "The Messenger of God, became angry one day, and stood up to address the people; and he said, 'Ask me, for you will not ask me about anything but I shall inform you about it.' So there stood up a Qurayshite man from Banū Sahm, 'Abdullāh b. Ḥadhāqah by name—and people used to vilify him—and said, 'O Messenger of God! Who is my father?' He said, 'Your father is so-and-so (and he asserted his relationship to his father).' 'Umar betook himself to him, kissed his foot and said, 'O Messenger of God! We are pleased with God as the Lord, and with you as the Prophet, and with the Qur'an as the leader; so pardon us, may God pardon you!' So he continued beseeching him until his anger subsided. It was on that day that he said, 'The child belongs to the bed and for the adulterer is the stone.' And it was (then) revealed to him: And people before you indeed asked such questions, (and then became disbelievers on account of them)." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: This tradition is narrated through several chains with variations in their wordings. However you have seen earlier that it does not fit on the verse.

(3) (al-Suyūṭī) quotes Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhhir and al-Ḥākim (who said that it is correct), who narrated from Tha'labah al-Khashnī that he said, "Then the Messenger of God, said, 'Verily God has laid down (some) limits, so do not transgress them; and has prescribed for you (some) obligations, so do not neglect them; and has made (some) things unlawful, so do not commit them; and has left (some) things, not because of forgetfulness, but as a mercy from Himself for you, so accept them and do not delve in them.'" (*ibid.*)

(4) 'Alī said, "Verily God has enjoined upon you some duties, so do not neglect them; and laid down for you some limits, so do not transgress them; and has forbidden you some things, so do not

commit them; and has passed over some things, and has not left them because of forgetfulness, so do not force yourself concerning them." (*Majma' al-bayān*; *Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī*)

(5) (al-Kulaynī) narrates through his chains from Abu al-Jārūd that he said, "Abū Ja'far, said, 'When I tell you anything, you should ask me for its authority from the Book of God.' Thereafter he said in one of his talks, 'Verily the Messenger of God had forbidden idle talk, squandering of wealth and excessive questioning.' It was said to him, 'O Son of the Messenger of God! Where is it from the Book of God?' He said, 'Verily God, the Mighty, the Great, says: *There is no good in most of their secret talks except (in his) who enjoins charity or goodness or reconciliation between people* (4:114); and He has said: *And do not give away your property which Allah has made for you a (means of) support to the weak of understanding* (4:5); and He has said: *do not put questions about things which if declared to you may trouble you.*'" (5:101) (*al-Kāfī*) (al-ʿAyyāshī) narrates from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad that he said: "I wrote to Abu al-Ḥasan al-Riḍā, (he wrote its reply) at the end of which he wrote: 'Have not you (people) been forbidden to ask too many questions? Yet you refuse to desist! Beware of it, for those who were before you had perished only because of abundance of their questions. So God, the Blessed, the Sublime, said: O you who believe! Do not put questions about things which if declared to you may trouble you, A people before you indeed asked such questions, and then became disbelievers in them.'" (*al-Tafsīr*)

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Verses 103–104

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ مِن بَحِيرَةٍ وَلاَ سَائِبَةٍ وَلاَ وَصِيلَةٍ وَلاَ حَامٍ وَلَـكِنَّ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُواْ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ لاَ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

(5:103) Allah has not ordained (the making of) a baḥīrah or a sāibah or a waṣīlah or a ḥāmi but those who disbelieve fabricate a lie against Allah, and most of them do not understand.

These were some cattle groups the people of the Era of Ignorance had made for them some rules which were based on respect and accorded them a sort of freedom, God in this verse rebuts the idea that He had might have made any of it. (The literal meaning: God has not made). This negated making is related to those cattle attributes, not their beings; because their beings, their selves, are God's creatures, without any doubt. Likewise, their attributes, so far as they are attributes, are created by God. What may be positively or negatively ascribed to God, are the self-same attributes inasmuch as they were thought to be the source of the rules, which those Arabs claimed for them. Thus, the negation of making of *baḥīrah* and its group means that God had not ordained those rules or laws which were ascribed to them and were well known among Arabs.

The exegetes differ about the meanings of the names of these four kinds of cattle, resulting in difference about details of their related laws—as you will soon see—yet it is accepted by all that those laws accorded them some sort of freedom, respect and care for their wellbeing; and that three groups were of camels, that is, *baḥīrah*, *sāibah* and *ḥāmi*, and one, *waṣīlah*, was of goat.

al-Baḥīrah: *Majma' al-bayān* says: It was a she-camel which gave birth five times, the last one being a male calf; they used to cleave its ear a wide tear; they refrained from riding or slaughtering it; it was not driven away from any water or pasture, and even if a tired traveller found it, he would not ride it. (Reported from al-Zajjāj.)

Also, it is said that when a she-camel had given birth five times, they looked at the fifth issue; if it was a male, they slaughtered it and men and

women all partook of it; but if it was a female, they cleaved its ear and it was called *al-baḥīrah*: its fur was not shorn; if it was slaughtered, the name of God was not mentioned on it; nor was it used for loading or riding; women were forbidden to taste even a drop of its milk or to get any benefit from it—its milk and benefits were reserved for men until it died; when it died, men and women joined in eating it. (Reported from Ibn ʿAbbās.)

And it is said that *al-baḥīrah* was the daughter of *al-sāibah*. (Reported from Muḥammad b. Isḥāq.)

al-Sāibah: *Majmaʾ al-bayān* says: It was what they used to let go free; a man made a vow that if he returned from his journey, or if he recovered from illness, or so on, then his she-camel would be *sāibah*; then it would be treated like *al-baḥīrah*, in that it would not be used in any way, nor would it be kept back from any water or pasture. (Reported from al-Zajjāj; and also it is the saying of ʿAlqamah.)

Also, it is said that it is was a she-camel that was freed for idols. Usually, a man freed whatever he wished from among his property; then he brought it to custodians, that is, servants of their deities, and they fed wayfarers of its milk and so on. (Reported from Ibn ʿAbbās and Ibn Masʾūd.)

Also, it is said that when a she-camel gave birth to ten females consequently, without any male calf coming in between, it was made free; they did not ride it, nor did they shear its fur, and except for a guest, no one could drink its milk; if after that she again bore a female, its ear was torn and it was left to roam with its mother; and it was that was called *al-baḥīrah*. (Reported from Muḥammad b. Isḥāq.)

al-Waṣīlah: *Majmaʾ al-bayān* says: It was taken out from goats. When a goat gave birth to a female kid, it belonged to them, and if it bore a male, it was slaughtered to their deities; but if it gave birth to a male and a female together, they said: It has joined its brother; and then the male kid was not slaughtered for their deities. (Reported from al-Zajjāj.)

Also, it has been said that when a goat gave birth seven times, then if the seventh was a male kid, they slaughtered it for their deities, and its meat was exclusively reserved for men; and if it was a female kid, it was allowed to live and joined the herd. But if the seventh pregnancy brought forth a male and a female kids, they said: The sister has joined its brother, as it is unlawful to us; so both became unlawful, and their benefit and milk was reserved for men to the exclusion of women. (Reported from Ibn Masʾūd

and Muqātil)

Also, it is said that *al-waṣīlah* was a goat which brought forth ten female kids in five pregnancies, without there being any male among them. Then they said she has joined. Then whatever was born to her after that, was reserved for men, the women being excluded from it. (Reported from Muḥammad b. Isḥāq.)

al-Ḥāmī: *Majma' al-bayān* says: It is a male camel. When a male camel had sired ten pregnancies, they used to say: Its back is protected. Nothing was loaded on it, nor was it prevented from water or pasture. (Reported from Ibn ʿAbbās and Ibn Mas'ūd, and also from Abū ʿUbaydah and al-Zajjāj.)

Also, it is said that when a male camel's child's child was impregnated, they said: Its back has become protected; so it was not ridden. (Reported from al-Farrā'.)

Although there is all this difference in meanings of these names, there is a strong probability that it portrays the variation in different tribes' usage and customs, because such superstitions were wide spread among ancient barbaric nations.

Be it as it may. The verse aims at refuting the rules they had fabricated for these four types of the cattle, wrongly ascribing them to God. Look at the divine words: "God has not ordained (the making of) a *baḥīrah* or a *sāibah* or a *waṣīlah* or a *ḥāmi*" followed immediately by the clause: "but those who disbelieve fabricate a lie against God."

This latter clause appears to answer a supposed question: When God denied ordaining *baḥīrah* and other types of cattle, it was as if somebody had asked: 'Then what is the position of the claims made by disbelievers?' And the answer came: *those who disbelieve fabricate a lie against Allah*. Then it was further explained, adding the clause: "a*nd most of them do not understand.*" It means that their positions differ in this fabrication; most of them fabricate against God what they do and they do not understand; while the remaining small group do understand the Truth, knowing well that what they ascribe to God is mere fabrication. These are the leaders whose words are listened to and who manage the affairs of the masses; and they are the obstinate and stubborn ones.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ قَالُواْ حَسْبُنَا مَا وَجَدْنَا

عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَلاَ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

(5:104) And when it is said to them: "Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger," they say: "That on which we found our fathers is sufficient for us." What! Even though their fathers knew nothing and did not follow the right way.

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It describes their attitude when they were invited to come to what God had revealed and to the Messenger whose responsibility was to convey the message. That call invited them to Truth, devoid of fabrication, and knowledge clear of ignorance. The preceding verse gathers fabrication and lack of understanding together on their side; obviously nothing remains for the opposite side—the side of God—except truth and knowledge.

But they did not discard it except because of blind imitation, as they said: That on which we found our fathers is sufficient for us.

al-Taqlīd (imitation, following) is not always wrong; sometimes it might be correct with some conditions—and that is when an ignorant person follows a knowledgeable one. This 'following' is the factor on which the progress of human society is based in all those affairs of life in which man is unable to acquire necessary knowledge. However, if an ignorant man follows another ignorant one in his ignorance, then it is highly condemnable in the eyes of the understanding people. Likewise, it is also objectionable if a learned man follows another learned one, going against his own deductions discarding it for another man's findings.

That is why God has refuted their claim and said: "What! Even though their fathers knew nothing and did not follow the right way." It indicates that reason—if there is reason—does not allow a man to refer to him who has no knowledge, nor does he follow the right way. This is the way of life, and it does not permit to follow a path which is not free of dangers, and whose condition is not known—neither independently nor by following an expert.

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Probably, the addition of: "and did not follow the right way," after the clause: "knew nothing," aims at completing the qualifications of speech, in its true sense; although reference by an ignorant person to another ignorant one is condemnable, but it is so only when the followed one is like the follower in ignorance without there being any distinction between the two. But if the followed one, even if ignorant, proceeds on the way guided by a

knowledgeable expert, then he follows the right way, and then there is no blame if somebody follows him on the way; because ultimately it turns out to be an imitation of a person who knows the details of the path.

It is now clear from above that the clause: "even though their fathers knew nothing," was not enough by itself to complete the proof against them, because there would have remained a possibility that their ignorant fathers might have been following learned guides, in which case there was no blame on them. Therefore, that possibility was removed by adding the clause: "and did not follow the right way," so there was no justification in imitating such people.

The preceding verse: *Allah has not ordained* (the making of) *a baḥīrah* ..., had shown that those people either had no understanding, (and they were the majority) or were stubborn and arrogant (and they were the misleading leaders); and it had made it clear that such people did not deserved to be addressed by God, or to be presented with divine arguments. That is the reason that this verse does not argue with them directly; it seems to address another group and avoids talking to them face to face; and therefore it says: "What! Even though their fathers knew nothing and did not follow the right way."

As previously discussed in the first part of this book,[1] there is a scholarly ethical examination of this adoption of other people's concepts and rulings, which you may refer for details.

It becomes evident from the verse that referring to the Book of God and to His Messenger, that is, to the *sunnah* is not in any way a form of the condemned blind imitation."

Examining Narrations

(1) It is narrated in *Tafsīr al-Burhān* from al-Ṣadūq, through his chains, from Muḥammad b. Muslim, from Abū Abdillāh that he said about the word of God, the Might, the Great: *Allah has not ordained* (the making of) *a baḥīrah or a sāibah or a waṣīlah or a ḥāmi.* "The people of (the Era of) Ignorance used to say, when a she-camel brought forth two calfs in one pregnancy, 'it has joined'; then they did not allow its slaughter or partaking of its

1 *al-Mīzān* (Eng.), vol.1. (Trans.)

meat; and when it bore ten (calves), they declared it to be *sāibah*; then they did not allow riding it or eating its meat; and *ḥāmī* was the male camel, they did not allow it (that is, riding or eating it). So, God revealed that He had not ordained prohibition of any of these things."

(2) (al-Baḥrānī says:) Then Ibn Bābawayh says: "It has been narrated that *al-baḥīrah* was a she-camel, when it gave birth five times, then if the fifth calf was a male, they slaughtered it (the calf) and men and women partook of it; and if the fifth was a female they tore its ear, and its meat and milk was unlawful to women, but if it died then it became lawful to women. *al-Sāibah* was a camel, which was freed by *nadhr* (vow); a man vowed that if God gave him recovery from illness or conveyed him to his home, he would do so.

"And *al-waṣīlah* was a goat. If a goat gave birth in seven pregnancies, and the seventh kid was a male, it was slaughtered, and men and women ate from it, but if it was a female, it was joined to the herd; and if there were two kids, a male and a female, they said: 'It has joined its brother;' then it was not slaughtered, and its meat was unlawful for women, except that it died (of itself), the eating it was lawful for men and women.

"And *al-ḥām* was a stallion, when a child of its child was (ready to be) ridden, they said: 'Its back is indeed protected.'" Then he (al-Baḥrānī) said: "Also, it is narrated that *ḥāmi* is a camel which brought forth ten pregnancies; so they said: 'Its back is indeed protected;' so it was not ridden, nor was it prevented from any pasture or water."

Author's comment: There are other traditions from the Shī'ite and Sunnite chains, regarding the meanings of these names: *baḥīrah, sāibah, waṣīlah* and *ḥāmi*, some other have been quoted above from *Majma' al- bayān*.

What is certain about their meanings, is that these groups of cattle enjoyed some freedom in the Era of Ignorance, and there were related laws, for example, it was not allowed to ride them or eat their meat, and they were never prevented from any pasture or water; also, that *waṣīlah* was from goats and the other three from camels.

(3) Ibn 'Abbās has narrated from the Prophet that he said: "Verily

ʿAmr b. Luḥī b. Qam'ah b. Khandaf became king of Mecca. He was the first who changed the religion of Ishmael and obtained idols and put up graven images[1] and invented *baḥīrah, sāibah, waṣīlah* and *ḥāmi*." (The Messenger of God said:) "And indeed I saw him in the Fire, the smell of his guts troubles the people of the Fire." Also, it is narrated that (the Holy Prophet said, "I saw him) dragging his guts in the Fire."

Author's comment: al-Suyūṭī has narrated this chains from Ibn ʿAbbās and others.

(4) al-Suyūṭī quotes ʿAbd al-Razzāq, Ibn Abī Shaybah, ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd and Ibn Jarīr who narrated from Zayd b. Aslam that he said, "The Messenger of God, said 'Verily I know the first man who invented *sāibah* and fixed idols, and the first man who changed the religion of Abraham.' They said, 'Who was he, O Messenger of God!' He said, 'Amr b. Luḥī, of Banū Ka'b; I had indeed seen him dragging his guts in the Fire.' (Then he said:) 'And I know who put marks on dedicated animals.' They said, 'Who was he, O Messenger of God?' He said, 'A man from Banū Mudlij; he had two she-camels, and he tore up their ears and forbade (to himself) their milk and backs; and he said, "These two are for God." Thereafter, he felt the need of them, so he drank their milk and rode (on) their backs.' He (the Prophet) said, 'And indeed I saw him in the Fire, and the two (camels) were shattering him with their mouths and trampling him down with their hooves.'" (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

(5) (al-Suyūṭī) quotes Aḥmad, ʿAbd b. Ḥamīd, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (in *Nawādir al-uṣūl*), Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Bayhaqī (in *al-Asmā' wa al-ṣifāt*) who narrated from Abu al-Aḥwaṣ, from his father, that he said, "I came to the Messenger of God wearing shabby garments. So he said to me, 'Do you have some wealth?' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'What type of wealth?' I said, 'From every kind, camels, goats, horses and slaves.' He said, 'When God has bestowed on you, it should be seen on you.' Then he said, 'Do your camels give birth to (calves with) unimpaired ears?' I said, 'Yes; and does camel give birth except like this.' He said, 'Then

1 In cir. 250 C.E. (Trans.)

perhaps you take a razor and cut off the ears of a group of them and then you say: "It is a *baḥīrah*," and split the ears of (another) group of them, and then you say: "It is separated?" 'I said, 'Yes.' (The Prophet) said, 'Don't do it; whatever God has given you is lawful to you.' Then he said, '*Allah has not ordained* (the making of) *a baḥīrah or a sāibah or a waṣīlah or a ḥāmi.*'" (*ibid.*)

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Verse 105

The verse enjoins the believers to take care of themselves and adhere to the path of their guidance; they should not be worried because a group of people has gone astray; everyone is to return to God, and He is to judge everyone according to his deeds.

The speech contains very deep meanings.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ ۖ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَنْ ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ ۚ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

(5:105) O you who believe! Take care of your souls; he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way; to Allah is your return, of all (of you), so He will inform you of what you did.

'Alaykum anfusakum (translated here, *take care of your souls*): '*Alaykum* is a verbal noun, and means, adhere; your soul is its objective; literally it means, adhere to your souls.

It is known that going astray and being on the right way—the opposites—take place when one proceeds on a way. If one adheres to the middle of the road, he reaches to the end of the road, and it is the destination that he had intended to arrive at in his life's journey. On the other hand, if he was not serious in his proceeding and deviated from the right path, then he goes astray and misses the intended goal. The verse supposes that man has got a path to tread on and a destination to arrive at; sometimes he adheres to the way and is guided aright; at other times he deviates from it and is led astray. However, there is no other destination that a man aims at except the blissful life and good end. Yet the verse declares that to God is the return to Whom all have to return—those who are guided aright as well as those who go astray.

The reward that a man wants to get in his natural proceeding is only with God; the guided ones achieve it and the misled ones are deprived of it. It inevitably means that all the paths used by the people of guidance and all the ways trodden upon by the people of misguidance finally end at God, and with Him is the intended destination, although those paths and

ways vary in conveying the man to desire and success or beating him with failure and loss; and likewise regarding nearness and distance; as God says: *O man! Surely thou art striving to thy Lord, a hard striving, so that thou art to meet Him* (84:6); *... now surely the party of Allah are the successful ones* (58:22); *Didn't you see those who changed Allah's favor for ungratefulness and made their people to alight into the abode of perdition* (14:28); *... then verily I am very near; I answer the prayer of suppliant when he calls on Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way* (2:186); *and* (*as for*) *those who do not believe, there is a heaviness in their ears and it is obscure to them; these shall be called to from a far-off place* (41:44).

God has made it clear in these verses that all men are unavoidably proceeding to Him; the road for some of them is short and it leads to guidance and success, while that for the others is long and it does not end at bliss and happiness, but takes the walker to destruction and perdition.

In short, the verse supposes for the believers and the disbelievers two paths, both of which end at God; and it directs the believers to look after their own interests and to turn away from the others, that is, from the people of misguidance. They should not weary themselves thinking about those people; because their account is on their Lord, not on the believers; these believers will not be asked about them, so why should they involve themselves with them. Thus the verse is near in meaning to another verse: *Say to those who believe* (*that*) *they forgive those who do not hope the days of Allah that He may reward a people for what they earn* (45:14). And similar is the connotation of the verse: *This is a people that have passed away; they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did* (2:134).

Therefore, a believer must remain occupied only in that which concerns his soul by proceeding on the path of guidance; he should not be shaken by what he sees of misguidance of the people and pervasion of sins among them; he should not waste his time with involvement in their affairs. Truth is truth even if abandoned, and falsehood is falsehood even if taken up, as God says: Say: "*The bad and the good are not equal, though the abundance of the bad may enchant you; so fear Allah, O men of understanding, that you may be successful*" (5:100); *And not alike are the good and the evil* (41:34).

In the light of the above discourse, the words of God: "he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way," are a sort of illusion which aims at forbidding the believers to be influenced by misguidance of those who are misled, as it may encourage them to leave the way of guidance, and to think that the present world does not support religion and does not allow them to be involved in spiritual affairs, as these things are remnants of the ancient simple customs whose time has passed away. God says: *And they say: "If we follow the guidance with you, we shall be carried off from our country"* (28:57).

It forbids them also to fear the others' misguidance and neglect their own guidance; in this way they would remain engaged in the others' affairs and would forget their own selves; thus they would become like the others. Actually, what is incumbent on a believer is only to call towards his Lord, enjoin the good, and forbid the evil. In short he is to arrange the normal causes, and then he should leave the affairs of the effects in the hands of God, because to Him belong all the affairs. He has not been told to put himself in perdition in trying to rescue others from peril; and he shall not be called upon to account for what others had done; he is not an overseer to check others' activities. Thus the verse is similar in meaning to what the Qur'an says in other places: *Then may be you will kill yourself with grief, sorrowing over them, if they do not believe in this announcement. Surely We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them (as to) which of them is best in deed. And most surely We will make what is on it bare ground without herbage* (18:6–8); *And even if there were a Qur'an with which the mountains were made to pass away, or the earth were travelled over with it, or the dead were made to speak thereby; nay! The commandment is wholly Allah's. Have not yet those who believe known that if Allah had willed He would certainly guide all the people?* (13:31).

This explanation shows that this verse is not in conflict with those of calling the people, and those telling the believers to enjoin good and forbid evil; because it only forbids the believers to remain involved in the people's misguidance, forgetting their own guidance to the right way. In other words, they should not put their own souls in perdition while endeavouring to rescue others from peril.

Moreover, calling the others to God, and enjoining good and forbidding evil are a part of a believer's involvement with the affairs of his own

self, and of his advancing on the path of his Lord. How can this verse be considered as going against the verses of the Call or those of enjoining good and forbidding evil, or taken to be abrogating them, while God has counted these factors as the designation of this religion and a foundation upon which it has been built; as God says: *Say: "This is my way: I invite* (*you*) *to Allah; with clear sight* (*are*) *I and he who follows me"* (12:108); *You are the best nation raised up for* (*the benefit of*) *men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong* (3:110).

What is incumbent on a believer is this: that he should invite to God with clear sight, and should enjoin the good and forbid the evil, aiming only at discharging a duty imposed upon him by God. He is not expected to kill himself in grief (if they do not listen) or to exert himself beyond the limit trying to influence the misguided people, as this is not his duty.

The verse proposes that there is one path for the believers that leads them aright, and another one for the disbelievers that misleads them to error. Then it orders the believers to adhere to their souls (as it says, *'alay-kum anfusakum*, which literally means, adhere to your souls). All this shows that the soul of the believer itself is the path which he should tread on and adhere to; exhorting one to a path conforms with exhortation to adhere to it, to never leave it; it does not connote adherence to the walker of the way; as we clearly see in verses like this: *And (know) that this is my path, the right one, therefore follow it; and follow not (other) ways, for they will lead you away from His way;* (6:153).

Now, when God wishes to exhort the believers to vigilantly proceed on the path of their guidance, He orders them to adhere to their souls. It makes it clear that the path, which they have to walk on and adhere to, is their own souls. That is, the soul of the believer is his path on which he proceeds to his Lord; it is the path of his guidance, and it leads him to his everlasting bliss.

In this way, this verse throws brilliant light on the aim and goal to which other verses point somewhat vaguely, like the words of God: *O you who believe! Fear Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for the morrow, and fear Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do. And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget their own souls; these it is that are the transgressors. Not alike are the inmates of the Fire and the dwellers of the garden; the dwellers of the garden are they that are the*

achievers (59:18–20).

These verses enjoin on every soul to consider what it has sent on ahead, and to vigilantly guard its good deeds, as it is its provision for tomorrow—and the best provision is piety and fear of God. The soul has a today and a tomorrow, and it is proceeding ahead as it has to go a long way, and its destination is God, and with Him is the best reward, and that is the garden. Therefore, every soul should continuously remember its Lord without forgetting Him for a single moment; because God is the destination, and forgetting the destination would make one forget the path; because whoever forgets his Lord forgets his soul; such a person would not gather any provision for his tomorrow and for his future journey, which he could use to preserve his life; and it would mean perdition. This is the meaning of what both sects have narrated from the Prophet that he said: "Whoever knew his soul knew his Lord."

It is the meaning that is supported by total meditation and correct consideration. Man, in the journey of his life—no matter to which end it would stretch out—has really no concern at all except the good of his soul and happiness of his life, even when he sometimes is engaged in what looks like benefiting the others. God says: *If you do good, you do good for your own souls, and if you do evil, it is for them (only)* ... (17:7).

There is only this man who changes from one condition to another, and develops from one stage to the other: foetus, child, youth, middle aged, and old; then continues his life in *barzakh*, then on the Day of Resurrection, then to the Garden or the Fire. It is this distance the man completes from his first existence until he reaches his Lord. God says: *And that to your Lord is the end goal* (53:42).

And this man does not go ahead in this journey except with some activities of mind (that is, beliefs, etc.) and some actions of limbs—be they good or evil. Whatever he produces today will be his provision tomorrow. Thus, the soul is the path of man to his Lord, and God is the final destination of his journey.

This is a path man has to tread upon compulsorily, as the words of God indicate: *O man! Surely thou art striving to thy Lord, a hard striving, so that thou art to meet Him* (84:6). This path has to be trodden by each man, be he a believer or disbeliever, alert and cautious or oblivious and careless. The verse, when it exhorts to adhere to this path does not intend

to push to it those who do not use it.

The verse's only purpose is to make the believers aware of this reality when they had become oblivious of it. Although this reality, like all other creative realities, is firmly established and is not affected by our knowledge or ignorance, yet man's attention to it does have manifest effect on his activities. And it is the actions that provide to the human soul an upbringing that is proper for its nature. When the actions are appropriate with reality and agree with purpose of creation, then the soul, which is brought up with their help, will be blissful in its endeavours; its projects will not fail and its dealings will not end in loss. We have explained it in many places in this book, which leaves no room for any doubt.

However, it may be elaborated in this background, as follows: Man, like other creatures of God, is placed under divine training and rearing, His attention encompasses all his affairs. And God has said: ... *there is no living creature but He holds it by its forelock; surely my Lord is on the straight path* (11:56); *This creative rearing, according to the training Allah gives to other things, proceeds together to Him; and He has said: ... now surely to Allah do all affairs eventually come* (42:53); This rearing does not change in any affair, and does not differ even a little between one thing and the other, because the path is straight, and the affair is the same and constant. God has also said: ... *you see no incongruity in the creation of the Beneficent God;* ... (67:3).

The end goal of man, and the destination of his affairs where his final result (his felicity and infelicity; his success and failure) is established is based by God's prescription on his character and his soul's aspects, which in their turn are based on deeds which are divided into good and evil, and piety and corruption. God says: *And (by) the soul and Him Who made it perfect, then He inspired it to understand what is wrong for it and right for it; he will indeed be successful who purifies it, and he will indeed fail who corrupts it* (91:7–10).

As you see, these verses put the perfected soul at one end, that is, at the start of his journey, its success, or failure at the other end, and it is the end of the journey. Then they base the two ends of success and failure on the soul's purification and its corruption, that is, the good and evil deeds, which the verses say, are inspired to man by God.

The verses in all this elaboration do not pass over the condition of

soul. They look at soul as a perfected creation of God; it is to which are ascribed the piety and impiety; it is, that is, purified and corrupted; and it is in which the man becomes successful and fails. As you understand, it follows the course dictated by creation.

Keep in view this creative reality: Man in journey of his life proceeds on the path of his soul; he cannot step away from it, even for one step, nor can he leave it, even for a single moment. The condition of the one who is ever alert to it and remembers its demands without being oblivious to it at all, cannot be like the position of the one who forgets it and is oblivious of the inescapable reality, as God has said: ... *Say: "Are those who know and those who do not know alike?" Only those possessed of understanding shall bear in mind* (39:9); *So if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy. And whoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall surely be a straitened life, and We will raise him on the Day of Resurrection, blind. He shall say: "My Lord! Why hast Thou raised me blind, and I was a seeing one indeed?" He will say: "Even so: Our signs came to you, but you forgot them; even thus shall you be forsaken this day"* (20:123–6).

When a man becomes aware of this reality and turns his attention to his actual position *vis-à-vis* his Lord, and compares himself to all the parts of the universe, he finds his soul cut off from others (while previously he saw it in another light) and hidden behind a curtain; no one can encompass or influence it except its Lord Who manages its affairs, and pushes it from behind and pulls it forward by His power and His guidance. He finds that it is alone with its Lord, and besides Him it has no guardian or master. Then the man understands the implication of the divine words: "*to God is your return, of all (of you), so He will inform you of what you did*," coming after the words: "*take care of your souls; he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way;*" and also he knows the meaning of the verse: *Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth?* (6:122).

At this point the soul's perception and discernment will change; and it will emigrate from the position of polytheism to the station of servitude and place of monotheism. He will be changing polytheism with monotheism, imaginary with real, distance with proximity, satanic arrogance with

divine humility, imaginary self-sufficiency with devotional dependence—if divine care takes its hand and leads it ahead.

Regrettably, we are not in a position to perfectly understand these ideas, because we are clinging to the earth and are involved in it, and it stops us from diving to the depth of these realities, which are disclosed by the religion and to which the Divine Book points; but we are very much entangled with unnecessary scums of this transitory life, which the divine speech speaks of only as a play and idle sport, as He says: *And this world's life is naught but a play and an idle sport;* (6:32); *That is the (last) reach of their knowledge;* (53:30).

Even so, the correct consideration, deep investigation and ad- equate meditation leads us to general confirmation of its broader out- lines, although we fall short of encircling its details. And God is the Guide.

Well, probably we have gone beyond the limits of brevity; therefore we should return to the beginning of this talk:

The verse may be taken as addressing the community per se. That is the clause: *O you who believe!* may be addressed to the believers' society as a group. In this case, the clause: "*take care of your souls*," will mean that the believers should reform their Islamic society by acquiring the attribute of being guided aright by divine guidance. They should preserve their religious cognition, virtuous deeds, and general Islamic symbols, as God says: *And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together and be not divided* (3:103). It was described in its exegesis that this holding fast collectively means adherence to the Book and Sunnah.

Accordingly, the clause: "he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way," will mean that the erroneous non-Islamic societies cannot hurt them in any way. Therefore, the Muslims are not obligated to exert most strenuously for spreading Islam among the non- Muslim nations. They should limit themselves within normal limits, as explained earlier.

Or, it may mean that they should not let the guidance they have got slip out of their hands by looking at the misguided societies as to how they are engrossed in base desires and how they enjoy the forbidden fruits of life; because all of them are to return to God and He will inform them of what they had done. Accordingly, the verse has the same implication as the following ones: *Let it not deceive you that those who disbelieve go to and fro in the cities (fearlessly). A brief enjoyment! Then their abode is hell, and*

evil is the resting place (3:196–7); *And do not stretch your eyes after that with which We have provided different classes of them, (of) the splendor of this world's life, ...* (20:131).

There may also be another meaning for the clause: "*he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way.*" The negative may refer to the harm emanating from the persons of those who err, and not to any of their particular characteristics or actions; thus the meaning will be unrestricted. Accordingly, the verse negates the idea that the disbelievers could hurt the Islamic society by forcefully changing it to a non-Islamic society. In this case, the verse will be similar in implication to the following verses: ... *This day have those who disbelieve despaired of your religion, so fear them not, and fear Me* (5:3); *They shall by no means harm you but with a slight distress; and if they fight you they shall turn (their) backs to you,* (3:111).

A group of ancient exegetes have said that the verse gives the believers permission to abandon the Call to religion and avoid enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. According to them the verse speaks exclusively about a time or situation when the conditions are not found for the said Call, and the enjoining and forbidding—that is, when the believer has no security against harm. They have narrated in this respect traditions, which shall be quoted under the ensuing "Traditions."

This interpretation means that the clause: "he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way," is an illusion to removal of responsibility, that is, you are not responsible for it. Otherwise, no one can have any doubt about the damage that the religious society suffers from spreading of misguidance, disbelief, and debauchery.

However, this meaning seems far-fetched, which does not agree with the context: If this verse is taken as particularizing the generality of the incumbency of the Call to religion and enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, then its language is not that of particularization; and if it is taken as an abrogator, then the verses of the Call and enjoining and forbidding confute abrogation. This topic has some addenda, which you will later see.

Examining Narrations

(1) al-Āmidī narrates from ʿAlī that he said, "He who knew his soul knew his Lord." (*al-Ghurar wa al-durar*)

Author's comment: Both sects have also narrated it form the Prophet;

and it is a well known *ḥadīth*. Some scholars have said that it uses the style of attaching an impossible to an impossible; and that it means that it is impossible for man to know his soul because it is impossible for him to comprehend God. But this view has been refuted: First, because of another Prophetic tradition: The more one of you knows his soul, the more he knows his Lord; and Second, because the *ḥadīth* gives a meaning of contradistinction to the verse: *And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget their own souls* (59:19).

(2) ʿAlī has also said, "Astute is he who knows his soul and purifies his deeds." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: In previous explanation it was described how purification is interconnected with gnosis of soul.

(3) He has also said, "Gnosis through the soul is the more beneficial of the two gnosis." (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: Apparently, the two gnosis refers to the gnosis through the signs of the soul and the one through the signs of the universe. God says: *We will soon show them Our signs in the universe and in their own souls, until it will become quite clear to them that it is the truth. Is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that He is a witness over all things?* (41:53); *And in the earth there are signs for those who are sure, and in your own souls (too); will you not then see?* (51:20–21).

How is the progress of soul more beneficial than the progress of universe? It is because the gnosis of the soul is usually not separate from the reform in its characteristics and activities, unlike the gnosis of the universe; gnosis of the signs is beneficial only because the signs per se lead to the gnosis of God, and of His names and attributes. For example, God is Living, death does not touch Him; Powerful, helplessness does not vitiate Him; All-knowing, ignorance does not mix with Him; He is the Creator of all things, Owner of everything; He is the Lord who takes care of everything by what it has earned; He created the creatures not because He had any need of them, but in order that He should bestow His favors on them as they deserve; then He will gather them for the day of gathering, there is no doubt in it: *so that He may reward those who do evil according to what they did, and He may reward those who do good with goodness* (53:31).

This and similar verses describe such true realities which, if man were to receive and master them, would represent before him the reality of his

life; he would understand that it is an eternal life having everlasting bliss or never ending misery; that it is not this temporary fantasy, this distracting pass time. This academic stand leads man to realize that he does have responsibilities and duties *vis-à-vis* his Lord and *vis-à-vis* his fellow human beings in this world as well as in the hereafter. No one is devoid of this thought, not even a bedouin, in a sort of a life after death whatever details they may attach to it—and they strive to practise good deeds in order to make that life happy and blissful. This factor is very clear to all.

The life which man adopts for himself, presents before his eyes the necessities and requirements which that life demands. Thus he is guided to the deeds, which normally guarantee the fulfilment of those needs. So he acts keeping his actions in conformity with those requirements. And it is what we call custom or religion.

In short, looking at the signs in the souls and in the universe, and arriving through them at the knowledge and gnosis of God, leads man to adhere to the true religion and the divine *sharī'ah*, inasmuch as the said gnosis represents the eternal human life, and it shows this life's connection with Oneness of God, Resurrection and Prophethood.

This guidance to belief and piety is shared by both ways, that is, the way of looking at the universe and that of looking at the souls. Both of these methods are useful; however that of looking at the signs of the soul is more beneficial. It is because in this process man has every chance to discover his own soul and its powers as well as its spiritual and physical instruments; he will also perceive if its affairs are in a moderate position or are inclined to this or that extreme; which virtuous or evil traits it has acquired, and which good or bad situations it has adhered to.

When man is involved in investigation of these affairs and be- comes sure of the security or danger, the felicity or infelicity which are attached to them, he is bound to diagnose his malady and know its treatment from close proximity. Then he can easily be engaged in mending the defective parts and preserving the good ones. It is unlike to looking at the signs in the universe: Although that too calls to the reform of the soul and its purification from inferior and depraved characteristics (and to adorning it with spiritual virtues), but that call comes from a far away place, and it is clear.

The tradition has another deeper meaning which is derived from the results of real researches in psychology, and it is this: Observation of the

signs of the universe and the gnosis acquired through it are academic observation based on process of reasoning and acquired knowledge. They are unlike to the observation of the soul, its powers and stages of its existence, and to the gnosis manifested from it, because it is a witnessing observation and automatic (unacquired) knowledge. A reasoned proposition depends for its existence on arrangement of analogous deductions and logical proofs; it continues as long as the man is attentive to its premises, is not oblivious to them, nor has his attention diverted from them. That is why the knowledge disappears as soon as attention is diverted from its proof; and then doubts raise their heads and controversies start.

It is contrary to the gnosis the soul has of its own entity, its own powers and the stages of its existence, because this knowledge is manifest. When man becomes engaged in looking at the signs of his own soul, and witnesses its poverty to its Lord and its neediness in all stages of its existence, he sees an amazing reality. He finds his soul attached to the divine grandeur and majesty, connected in its existence, life, knowledge, power, hearing, sight, will, love and all its attributes and activities, to the infinite splendor and brilliance, beauty and perfection of the (divine) existence, life, knowledge, power and other perfections.

He will then see manifestly what we have described earlier that the human soul has no concern except with itself, and never goes out of itself. Its only occupation is the compulsive progress in its own path; and that it is separated from everything it ever thought that it was joined to and mixed with—except its Lord who encompasses its inner and outer self as well as all things besides it. The soul now finds that it is always in private audience with its Lord, even if it happens to be surrounded by a multitude of the people.

At this stage, it turns away from everything and fixes its attention to its Lord; it forgets everything and remembers only its Lord; now no curtain hides Him from it, nor does any screen conceal Him from it; it is the height of gnosis ordained for man.

This knowledge deserves to be called knowledge of God by God. As for the knowledge acquired through reasoning process, which results from observation of the signs of the universe—be it through analogy, conjecture or some other ways—it is the knowledge of an image in mind through an image in mind. Far be it from God to be encompassed by a mind, or that

His Person could be equated to an image fabricated by any of His creatures: *... and they do not comprehend Him in knowledge* (20:110).

(4) *Biḥār al-anwār* quotes from *al-Irshād* and *al-Iḥtijāj*, from al-Sha'bī that the Leader of the Faithful said, *inter alia*, in a talk: "Verily God is too great to be hidden from anything, or for anything to be hidden from Him."

(5) Mūsá b. Ja'far said, *inter alia*, in a talk: "There is no curtain between Him and His creation except the creation (itself); He is hidden without any covering curtain; and is concealed without any hiding veil; there is no god except He, the Great, the Sublime." (*al-Tawḥīd*)

(6) (al-Ṣadūq) narrates from ʿAbd al-A'lā from al-Ṣādiq *inter alia* in a *ḥadīth*, that he said, "And whoever thinks that he knows God through a curtain, or form, or image, is an idolator; because curtain, form and image are other than Him, and He is only One, professed to be One; how can be he a monotheist who thinks that he declares Him to be One through one other than Him? Only he knows God who knows Him through God; so whoever does not know Him through Him, he (in fact) does not know Him, he only knows someone other than Him ..." (*ibid.*).

Author's comment: The traditions narrated from the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt on this topic are very numerous; probably God will give us *tawfīq* to quote and explain them, God willing, in the *tafsīr* of chapter seven, "The Battlements."

It has indeed come out from the above that observation in the signs of the souls is the most precious and valuable; and only that leads to the real gnosis. Therefore, when ʿAlī counted the gnosis through the soul as the more beneficial of the two gnosis, and not as the only appointed way of gnosis, he knew that the general public was incapable of attaining to that gnosis. The Book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet are agreed, and the custom of the Prophet and his Ahl al-Bayt has established, that the belief of the one who believes in God through observation of His creation, is fully accepted; and it is the outlook that is prevalent among the believers; so the ways are beneficial, although the benefit in the way of the soul is more complete and comprehensive.

(7) ʿAlī said, "The gnostic is he who knows his soul and liberates it and

purifies it from all that removes it far." (*al-Durar wa al-ghurar*)

Author's comment: That is, liberates the soul from captivity of desire and slavery of lust.

(The author has quoted here many sayings of the same Imam from the same book, which are enumerated below. Trans.):

The biggest ignorance is a man's oblivion to affairs of his soul.

The biggest wisdom is man's knowledge of his soul.

The most knowledgeable of people regarding his soul is the one who fear his Lord most.

Author's comment: It is because he is the most knowledgeable of all about his Lord, and God has said: *verily fear Allah only those of His servants who are possessed of knowledge;* (35:28).

The best understanding is man's knowledge of his soul; so whoever knows his soul is possessed of understanding, and whoever is ignorant of it, has gone astray.

I am surprised about the man who searches for his lost item, while he has lost his own soul and does not search for it.

I am surprised about the man who is ignorant of his soul, how does he know his Lord.

The end goal of knowledge is that man should know his soul.

Author's comment: It has been explained earlier, why it is the end goal of knowledge, because it is the knowledge in reality.

How can he know another person who is ignorant of his own soul?

Enough is for man in knowledge that he should know his soul, and enough is for him in ignorance that he should not know his soul.

Whoever knew his soul, became free.

Author's comment: That is, became free from worldly entanglement; or became free from people being secluded from them; or became free from everything through sincere devotion to God.

Whoever knows his soul fights it, and whoever does not know it leaves it unfettered.

Whoever knows his soul, his affair (rank) becomes great.

Whoever knows his soul, shall be more knowledgeable about others; and whoever is ignorant of his soul, shall be more ignorant of others.

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Whoever knows his soul, he has indeed reached the end goal of all gnosis and knowledge.

Whoever does not know his soul, goes far away from the path of deliverance, and wanders at random in error and ignorance.

Knowledge of soul is the most beneficial of all knowledge.

He attained the great success who achieved the knowledge of the soul.

Don't be ignorant of your soul, because he, who is ignorant of his soul, is ignorant of everything.

(8) al-Ṣādiq said *inter alia* in a *ḥadīth*: "Whoever thinks that he knows God through mind's imagination, is a polytheist; and whoever thinks that he knows God by name, not meaning, has indeed agreed to calumny, because the name is of a later appearance; and whoever thinks that he worships the name and the meaning, has indeed made a partner for God; and whoever thinks that he worships through attribute, not through perception, refers to an absentee; and whoever thinks that he joins the characterized (entity) to the attribute, has belittled the great one; *and they esteem not Allah with the estimation due to Him* (6:91)."

He was asked: "Then how is the path of monotheism?" He said, "The door of search is possible, and the pursuit of the way out exists; verily the knowledge of a present person comes before his attributes, and knowledge of the attributes of an absent one comes before his person."

It was said (to him): "And how can the knowledge of a present person come before his attributes?" He said, "You know him, and know (about) his knowledge, and you know your own self through him and do not know your self through your self; and you know that whatever is found in him is for him and through him. As they said to Yūsuf: '*Are you indeed Yūsuf?' He said: 'I am Yūsuf and this is my brother*' (12:90). So, they knew him through him, and did not know him through someone else, nor did they assert his identity by themselves through imagination ..." (*Tuḥaf al-'uqūl*)

Author's comment: We have described under the second[1] *ḥadīth* of this section ('Gnosis through the soul is the more beneficial of the two gnosis') that when man becomes engaged with signs of his soul and leaves all other things for it, he becomes exclusively connected to God and forgets everything; it brings in its wake the gnosis of his Lord, a direct knowledge without intervention of any intermediary, without causation by any cause. It is because when one adheres exclusively to God, then every curtain is raised; and at this juncture man looks at the arena of Divine Greatness and Majesty which makes him so dazzled and perplexed that he forgets his own self, his own soul. This gnosis, this knowledge truly deserves to be called the Knowledge of God through God.

And then the reality of his soul will be clear to him that it is totally dependent on God, and completely owned by Him in such a way that it is not independent of Him in any affair. And this is the implication of the Imam's words, "and you know your own self through him and do not know your self through your self; and you know that whatever is found in him is for him and through him."

(9) al-Mas'ūdī has narrated a similar theme in *Ithbāt al-waṣiyyah* from the Leader of the Faithful that he said inter alia in a sermon: "So, glory be to Thee! Thou hast filled everything and hast separated from everything; so Thou art such that nothing misses Thee; and Thou art the doer of whatever Thou wishest; Blessed art Thou, O He that every comprehender is of His creation, and every limited is from His make. ...

"Glory be to Thee! Which eye can stand opposite the splendor of Thy light, or can rise to the light of Thy power's reflection, or which understanding can comprehend (even) what is below it? Except the eyes from which curtains have been removed and the blinding covers have been torn away; thus their spirits have soared high on the wing-tips of the spirits; they talked with Thee in whisper under Thy pillars, and entered in middle of the lights of Thy splendor; they looked from the steps of dust to Thy Majesty; so the people of (heavenly) Kingdom have named them visitors, and the people of (worldly) power have called them settlers." (*Ithbāt*

1 It is in fact the third *ḥadīth*. (Trans.)

al-waṣiyyah)

(10) (al-Majlisī) has quoted from *Irshād al-qulūb* of al-Daylamī (and has written after that two chains of narration for this *ḥadīth*) which inter alia says:

"So whoever acts according to My pleasure, I attach to him three characteristics: I introduce to him a thankfulness which is not mixed by ignorance, and a remembrance which is not mingled by forgetfulness, and a love that he does not prefer love of the creatures to My love.

"So when he loves Me, I love him, and I open the eye of his heart towards My greatness; and do not keep hidden from him My special creation; I talk to him in secret in darkness of night and light of day, until his talk with the creatures and his social intercourse with them are discontinued; I make him hear My talk and that of My angels; and I let him know the secret which I have kept hidden from My creatures; I dress him in modesty until all the creation feels shy of him; he walks on the earth while (his sins are) forgiven to him; I make his heart attentive and seeing; I do not hide from him anything of the Garden and the Fire; and let him know what fright and hardship will afflict the people in resurrection, and how I'll take account of wealthy and poor, ignorant and knowledgeable. I shall make him sleep in his grave and send to him Munkar and Nakīr in order that they should question him; he will not see (feel) the sorrow of death, darkness of grave and *laḥad*[1] and terror of the observing place; then I shall set up for him his balance, and spread his book of accounts, then I'll put his book in his right hand, which he shall read spread about; then I shall not appoint any interpreter between Me and him. So these are the attributes of the lovers.

"O Aḥmad! Keep your concern, and make your tongue one tongue, and keep your body alive which is never inattentive; whoever is heedless of Me, I don't care in which valley he perishes."

Author's comment: Although the last three traditions are not related to this topic of uprightness and rectitude, we have quoted them here to let

1 Charnel vault with a niche for the corpse in the lateral wall. (Trans.)

the scholars with critical insight see for themselves, as we have described earlier, that true gnosis of God is not fully acquired through thoughtful knowledge. These traditions mention many items of divine gifts, which can never be attained through rational process.

These are upright and correct traditions, correctness of which is witnessed by the Divine Book, as we shall fully explain, God willing, in exegesis of the seventh chapter, "The Battlements."

(11) al-Qummī narrates in his *al-Tafsīr*, under the verse: *O you who believe! Take care of your souls; he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way*, that the Imam said, "Keep your souls good, and do not pursue the people's shortcomings, nor should you remind them (of their defects); because their misguidance will not harm you when you are good."

Author's comment: The tradition supports what we have explained earlier that the verse aims at forbidding too much involvement in society's reform, more than is usual for such call and for enjoining good and forbidding evil; but it does not allow negligence of that call and enjoining and forbidding.

(12) al-Ṣādiq said: "This verse (5;105) was revealed concerning *taqiyyah* (dissimulation)." (*Nahj al-bayān*)

Author's comment: The tradition explains that the verse speaks particularly for the situation when one is afraid of the people of misguidance in calling to the truth, enjoining good and forbidding evil, because in *sharī'ah* this duty is conditional on there being no danger in it. But we have earlier explained that the apparent meaning of the verse does not support it.

Of course, al-Suyūṭī has quoted in *al-Durr al-manthūr* words of a group of ancient exegetes giving the same meaning, like Ibn Mas'ūd, Ibn 'Umar, Ubayy b. Ka'b, Ibn 'Abbās and Makḥūl, but the traditions narrated from the Prophet on this topic do not support it.

(13) The said tradition is the one narrated by al-Tirmidhī (and he has said that it is correct), Ibn Mājah, Ibn Jarīr, al-Baghawī (in his *Mu'jam*), Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Ṭabarānī, Abu al-Shaykh, Ibn Marduwayh, al-Ḥākim (and he has said that it is correct), and al-Bayhaqī (in *Shu'ab al-'īmān*) from Abū 'Umayyah al-Sha'bānī that he said, "I came to Abū Tha'labah al-Khashanī and said to him, 'How do you make (that is, interpret) this verse?'

He said, 'Which verse?' I said, 'The word of God: *O you who believe! Take care of your souls; he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way*.' He said, 'Indeed, by God! You have asked a man who fully knows it. I had asked the Messenger of God about it. He had said, "Rather you should enjoin each other the good and forbid each other the evil; (continue in this way) until when you see that niggardliness is obeyed, base desire is followed, worldly (attraction) is preferred, and every opinion holder admires his opinion, then you should take care of your own soul especially, and leave alone the affairs of the general people; because there are ahead of you the days of patience, the one patient in those days will be like the one holding live coal in hand; the one doing (good) deeds in those days shall have the reward of fifty men doing (good) deeds like yours."'"

Author's comment: The same is the theme of what Ibn Marduwayh has narrated from Ma'ādh b. Jabal from the Prophet. The tradition shows that enjoining the good and forbidding the evil were not eliminated by this verse.

(14) (al-Suyūṭī) narrates from Aḥmad, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Ṭabarānī and Ibn Marduwayh, from Abū 'Āmir al-Ash'arī, that there was something among them, and he was restrained from (coming to) the Messenger of God; then he came to him; (The Prophet) said, "What had kept you away?" He said, "O Messenger of God! I read this verse: O you who believe! Take care of your souls; he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way." (Abū 'Āmir) says, "'Then the Prophet said, 'Where have you gone? It only means: He who errs from among the disbelievers cannot hurt you when you are on the right way.'" (*al-Durr al-manthūr*)

Author's comment: As you see, the tradition reserves the order of the verse particularly to the permission of abandoning the call of dis- believers to the truth; and diverts it from the permission of discarding enjoining the good and forbidding the evil in matters of *sharī'ah*. Moreover, the verses which show obligatoriness of the call to truth, and its related verses regarding *jihād* and so on make it crystal clear that the verse under discussion does not go against the verses of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil.

(15) (al-Suyūṭī) narrates from Ibn Marduwayh, from Abū Sa'īd

al-Khudrī that he said, "I mentioned before the Messenger of God the word of God, the Mighty, the Great: *O you who believe! Take care of your souls; he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way.* The Prophet of God said, 'Its interpretation has not come yet; its interpretation will not come until Jesus son of Mary comes down.'" (*ibid.*)

Author's comment: The same comment, as the above are applicable here too.

(16) (al-Suyūṭī) narrates from Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Ḥudhayfah about the verse: Take care of your souls; he who errs cannot hurt you when you are on the right way, that he said: "When you have enjoined the good and forbidden the evil."

Author's comment: It is a moderate interpretation that in the end returns to what we have explained; and Saʾīd b. al-Musayyab also has narrated like it.

An Academic Discourse

(Composed of historical indications and other psychological discussions, etc. in various sections:)

Section 1

Man, even the primitive one, has always been saying, 'I' and 'my soul'; he uses these words to point to a reality of creation; and inevitably he comprehends what he says and knows what he intends. However, his attention is fully focused on mobilization of the basic elements of his physical life, and he remains engaged in bodily works for fulfilling his material needs. This factor prevents him from thinking deeply on the affairs of this soul to which he refers with the words, 'I' and 'my soul'; and sometimes he imagines that it refers to the body and nothing else.

And sometimes he finds that the distinction between a living person and a dead is apparently the breathing which continues as long as a man is alive; and when it is discontinued, or the breathing system is blocked, he turns dead, he loses all his perceptions, his existence is nullified and his personality is negated. For this reason, he comes to believe that the soul is the breath, which is a wind or a special type of wind; that is why he calls it spirit; and believes that man is a sum total of spirit and body.

Alternatively, he sees that the bodily perception and movement depend on the blood which is retained in the body, circulates in its limbs and flows in his veins and arteries; also he realizes that the life is related to this red liquid and that man dies when blood is completely taken out his body. Keeping these factors in view, he decides that the soul is the blood; so he calls the blood soul, and divides it into a blood, which comes out with a gush and that which does not come out with a gush.

Also, he looks at the changes taking place in semen, when it is swallowed by womb and goes on developing from one stage to the next until it becomes a man. This observation makes him believe that the human soul is the basic ingredients, which are gathered in the semen; and these ingredients continue in the human body throughout his life. May be someone would think that these parts are safe from change and nullity; and humanity continues with continuity of these ingredients, and nullity and change does not affect it. However, if the human soul were the ingredients mentioned above—whether we said that they should combine in a particular form or did not say it—it would entail a lot of impossibilities, described in its place.

These and similar views do not refute what man, per se, comprehends from his words, 'I' and 'my soul'; and makes no mistake in it at all. It is not unimaginable that we may correctly comprehend a reality from among the creative ones as a general principle; but we fall into error when we study its quiddity in detail. There are many academic subjects, like exterior or interior perceived objects which we clearly comprehend—not withstanding the sophists and agnostics—and the scholars go on disputing about them generations after generations.

Likewise, the general public, beyond the circle of research scholars, observes in their souls what the specialists do without any difference, and even then are ignorant of its details, unable to explain the particulars of its existence.

In short, there is no doubt that man at all stages of his existence is aware of a thing, not outside himself, to which he points with the words 'I' and 'my soul.' When he acquires penetrating sight and deep understanding, he finds that it is totally different from what he perceives of physical affairs, which are subject to change and division and are related to time and space. Also, he finds it totally different from this material body which with its

limbs and ingredients is governed by the matter's laws; he may sometimes forget one of his limbs or become oblivious of his body altogether, but he never forgets his soul, nor does he become oblivious of it. Don't be misled by such expressions which you may occasionally use, as: 'I forgot myself;' 'I became oblivious of my soul,' or 'I was distracted from my soul;' because they are metaphorical expressions throwing light on different psychological considerations. Don't you see that even now you ascribe this forgetfulness, obliviousness and distraction to your soul, and you say that your perceiving soul had perceived an item?

Also, put aside what some people think that an unconscious person becomes oblivious of his person and soul. Because what he realizes after returning to consciousness is that he does not remember perceiving his soul at the time of unconsciousness, not that he remember that he did not perceive it—and there is a great difference between the two. Also, some people do remember what they had experienced during their unconsciousness like the dream, which we remember after getting up from sleep.

In any case, there is no doubt that man, per se, is never devoid of this psychological perception which represents before his eyes the reality of his soul to which he refers as 'I.' If he becomes a little familiar with what he observes about his soul and turns aside from his bodily functions and material desires, he will certainly come to the conclusion that his soul is something different from the root of matter and materials, as he finds that the particulars of his soul and its effects are quite different from the particulars of material things and their effects.

However, its involvement with daily engagements, and concentrating the attention to desires of material life and fulfilling the physical needs lead him to neglect this aspect and to agree with those simple primitive ideas, stopping at general observation.

Section 2

Although a normal man is deeply involved in affairs of food, clothes and abode and in marital relations, which prevent him from contemplating the reality of his soul and researching various aspects of his person; but various happenings which overwhelm him during his life, are often not devoid of factors which turn away his attention from other than himself and concentrate it to his soul—for example, intense fear which makes him

forget everything and turn to his soul as if he were holding it fast lest it perishes and disappears; or like happiness or grief which attracts the soul to what it is pleased with; or like intense love which causes him to cling to his beloved or his remembrance, so much so that he has no care except that of his beloved; or like a high emergency in which man is cut off from everything and turns to himself; and many similar factors.

These various factors and diverse causes, sometimes, place a man (or men) in a position where such things appear before him, which are not conceived by manifest senses or empty thoughts. For example, a man who is locked in a dark desolate place is overwhelmed by fear and often sees dreary things or hears terrible voices that threaten him to utmost degree. It is this phenomenon that they sometimes attribute to ghoul, jinn, or an invisible caller, and so on.

Sometimes he is so overwhelmed by intense love, or sharp grief and sorrow that they block his manifest senses and concentrate his perception on what he loves or what he grieves for, and he sees during sleep or in a condition between sleep and wakefulness various past events or future happenings, or such hidden phenomena which other people's senses do not perceive.

Often, when willpower is strengthened with certainty, intense belief, and decisive surety, then he accomplishes such feats which a normal man cannot do, nor can usual causes lead to them.

These minor happenings, which are rare in comparison to generally common events, take place because of various factors indicated earlier. However, there is no need to offer proofs to establish that they do take place, because each of us remembers such incidents, which he, or others known to him, has experienced. As for the real cause that brings it into being, this is not the place to look into it.

What we should be aware of is this: All these affairs depend for their occurrence on a sort of diversion of the soul from involvement with outside affairs—and particularly physical enjoyments—and its inclination to its own self. That is why the foundation of all psychological regime with all its innumerable divergences and differences—is contradiction of the soul in general; and it is only because devotion of soul to the obedience of its desires diverts it from being engaged with itself, and leads it to its extraneous desires. Thus its attention is divided and it adheres to those

base desires and forgets its own self.

Section 3

There is no room for doubt that the factors leading to the psychological effects happen to some people temporarily and for short periods, and in the same way happen to some others permanently or for a longer period. Often we find ascetic people abstaining from worldly enjoyments and material objects of desire; their attention is concentrated on training the soul and remaining engaged in proceeding on the path of the inner self.

Also, it should not be imagined that this psychological avocation is a newly invented phenomenon of this time of ours. Reports and observation prove that it was prevalent in the society from ancient times. Go back to the earliest days of humanity and you will see this phenomenon present in their midst.

Section 4

Research about various nations, meditation on their customs and traditions and analysis of their beliefs and actions make us aware that engagement in cognition of the soul—with its various ways—for attaining to its wonderful effects, was prevalent among them; rather it was a well coveted prize for which they spent best of the times and highest prices since ancient eras. For proof, look at the primitive nations in various parts of the Earth, like Africa, etc. and you will find among them even today the remnants of the myths of witchcraft and oracular prophecies, and they firmly believe in their reality and their truth.

Deep consideration of what has been reported to us of old religions and sects, like Hinduism, Buddhism, Sabiism, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, indicates that their main concern is cognition of the soul and attainment to its effects. This is deeply ingrained in them, although they may differ in its description, teaching and training.

Although Hinduism—and it is the ancient religion of India—differs from the religions of the Book in monotheism and affairs of prophethood, yet it calls to purification of the soul and cleanliness of the inner self, and especially for the Brahmins themselves.

It has been quoted from al-Bīrūnī (from his book, *Mā lil Hind min maqūlah*) that he said: "A Brahmin's life, after completing seven years, is

divided into four stages:

"At the beginning of the first stage, that is, in his eighth year, the Brahmins gather around him to make him aware and teach him his responsibilities and to enjoin him to hold fast to them and follow them all his life."

He says: "When he enters the first stage up to 25 to 48 years of his age, it is incumbent upon him to abstain from the world; he should make the earth his foothold and proceed to the study of Veda and its explanation, the scholastic theology and jurisprudence, from a teacher whom he should serve day and night, he should take bath three times a day and offer sacrifices to the fire in the morning and the evening, and should prostrate before his teacher after offering the sacrifice; he should fast on alternate day and should abstain from eating meat altogether; he should stay in the house of the teacher, coming out of it only once at noon or evening for begging; whatever he gets from begging, he would put before his teacher in order that he may take what he likes from it, allowing him to use whatever is left, and he eats from it; and he should carry firewood to the fire because fire has a high honor in their eyes, and the lights are in proximity with each other.

"The same was the situation in other nations, as they considered a sacrifice accepted if fire came down to it; and the worship of idols, stars, cow, donkeys or images did not turn them away from fire worship."

He (al-Bīrūnī) said: "As for the second stage, it was from 25 years to 50 or 70 years of his age. At that time the teacher allows him to marry; so he marries and seeks offspring." Then he describes how he lives with his family and the people, how he earns his livelihood, and how he behaves in the society."

Then he said: "As for the third stage, it is from 50 to 70 or 90 years of his life. In this stage, he practices self-denial and asceticism, discards all worldly adornments, entrusts his wife to his children (if she does not accompany him into wilderness); he lives outside civilization as he did in the first stage; he does not stay under a roof and does not wear except that which covers his shame from bast of a tree; he does not sleep except on earth without bedding, he takes only fruit and vegetable for his food; he lets his hair grow without putting oil in it."

Then he continued: "As for the fourth stage it continues to the end of his life. He wears red robe, keeps in hand a walking stick, and concentrates on thinking and making his heart free of friendships and enmities;

he discards desire, greed and anger, and always remains alone."

"If he intends to go to a place where he would get some spiritual reward, he does not stay in any wayside village longer than a day, nor in a wayside town more than five days; if someone gives him anything he does not keep from it for tomorrow. He has no choice but to persevere in the conditions of the path that leads to deliverance and conveys to a state from which there is no return to the world. Then he describes the general laws which a Brahmin is obligated to follow throughout his life."

As for other sects of the Hindus, like the Yogis who exercise breath control and imaginations, and the spiritualists and the philosophers, etc., each of these groups do have systems of very tough practical regimes, none of which is free from seclusion and solitude and forbidding enjoyable desires to the self.

As for the Buddhists, their religion is based on cleansing of the soul and opposition to its desires; they forbid soul's desires to it in order to attain the real cognition. This was the path trodden by Buddha himself in his life. It is reported that he was a prince or a son of a noble man; he rejected adornments of life and discarded the throne for a desolate jungle in the peak of his youth. He left the company of the people and denied to himself privileges of life. He proceeded to train his soul and to think over the secrets of creation, until the true cognition was thrown into his heart, when he was thirty-six years old. Then he went forth to the people and called them to train their souls and attain cognition. He remained in this mission for about forty-four years, as the history books say.

As for the Sabians, that is, the people of spirituality and its idols: Although they do not believe in prophethood, yet they do have various ways for reaching the perfect cognition of soul, which do not differ much from the ways of the Hindus and the Buddhists. Their views according to the book, *al-Milal wa al-niḥal* are as follows:

"It is incumbent on us to cleanse our souls from the filth of physical desires, and to clear our characteristics from the relations of our desire and anger, in order there happens an affinity between us and the spiritual powers, so that we may ask our requirements from them, present our conditions before them and direct our attention in all our affairs towards them; then they would intercede on our behalf before our and their Creator and our and their Sustainer; this purification is not attained but through our

earning and endeavours when we wean our souls from base desires seeking help from the spiritual world. This help is sought with entreaty, supplication and invocation, keeping up prayer, paying *zakāt*, fasting, offering sacrifices, burning incenses and enchanting spells; thus our souls acquire ability without any medium."

Although all these groups differ somewhat among themselves in general beliefs related to creation, they however agree that it is incumbent to train the soul for attaining the perfect cognition and happiness of (next) life.

As for the Manichaeans (from the dualists), their religion is known to be based on the belief that the soul is from the sublime illuminated world, which has descended to this material darkened net which is called 'body'; its bliss and perfection depends on the release from this dark house to the sphere of the light, either by choice through psychological regimes, or by compulsion through natural death.

As for the People of the Book, that is, the Jews, the Christians and the Zoroastrians, their holy books, that is, the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Zend-Avesta, are full of the Call to redemption and restoration of the soul and opposition to its desires.

The two Testaments always speak about denial of this world and involvement in cleansing the inner self, and there have been appearing among them large groups of monks and ascetics generation after generation, and especially among the Christians, as monasticism is a well adopted system of theirs.

The noble Qur'an has mentioned their monasticism in two places: *... this is because there are priests and monks among them and because they do not behave proudly.* (5:82); *... and (as for) monasticism, they innovated it—We did not prescribe it to them—only to seek Allah's pleasure, but they did not observe it with its due observance ...* (57:27).

Also, it has mentioned devout worshippers from among the Jews, as it says: *They are not all alike; of the People of the Book there is an upright party; they recite Allah's communications in the night time and they prostrate (to Him). They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong, and they strive with one another in hastening to good deeds, and those are among the good* (3:113–4).

As for various other groups from among the people who observe tough

regimes and psychological exercises, like those who indulge in witchcraft and natural magic, use talismans, strive to subdue the spirits and jinn, and delve in cryptic letters and stars, etc; also those who (claim to) call the spirits and subdue the souls, all of them have their particular psychological regimes which produce a sort of control over affairs of souls.[1]

In short, what is understood from all the above is this. The ultimate goal of all the people of religions is to purify the soul by rejecting its desires and with engagement in cleansing it from filthy characteristics and undesirable conditions.

Section 5

Probably, you might say that what has been proved from the customs of the people of religions and sects and from their traditions is voluntary renunciation of the world, and it is quite different from the issue of cognition of soul or engagement in its affairs which is the main topic.

In more clear words, what the religions and sects (which call men to servitude towards God in one way or the other) exhort the man, is to abstain from worldly enjoyments by doing good deeds, leaving aside base desires, sins and evil characteristics, in order that he should prepare himself for the best rewards, either in the next world as is clearly indicated by the prophetic religions like Judaism Christianity and Islam, or in this world as maintained by idol-worshipers and believers in transmigration of souls, etc.

Thus, a man who devoutly worships according to the direction given by religion, follows what he is called to, a sort of self-denial, without ever thinking that there was an immaterial soul, and that soul may attain to a sort of cognizance which guarantees its happiness and perfection of existence.

Likewise, the people who follow the tough regimes of various ways and systems, indulge in very tough (mental and psychological) exercises, indulge in them only for attaining the promised status and acquiring the result of their activities, like effectiveness of the will for example; and they remain oblivious of the affairs of the said soul from the start to the finish

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1 See for it the books: *al-Sirr al-maktūm* (by al-Rāzī), *al-Dhakhīrat al-Iskandariyyah* and *al-Kawākib al-sab'ah* (by al-Ḥakīm Ṭamṭam al-Hindī), the *Risālah* of al-Sakkākī on *Taskhīr*; also see *al-Durr al-maktūm* (by Ibn 'Arabī), and other books on spiritualism and *iḥḍār* lately published and others. (Auth.)

of the said exercise.

Moreover, among these people there are those who believe that soul is merely a material and physical item like blood, or steam mingled with blood, or original ingredients of man's body. There are also those who think that soul is a fine body similar to this physical one, which resides inside it and it is the carrier of life. In this background how can it be said that all people intend with it attainment of cognizance of soul?

However, you should remember what has been stated earlier that man (in all these stations where he indulges in activities which prevent the soul from being engaged in external affairs and various material enjoyments and turn its attention to its own self in order to attain to such characteristics and effects which are not reached through material causes and physical normal factors) desires nothing except to be separated from external causes and factors and to become independent by himself, so that he may get the particular results to which material and normal factors cannot reach.

Therefore, a devoutly religious person, who lives an ascetic life, believes that it is incumbent on man to choose for himself his real bliss and happiness, and that it is the good life of the next world (according to those who believe in resurrection) or the good worldly life which gathers all good for him and repulses every evil from him (according to those who do not believe in the next world like idol-worshipers and believers in transmigration of soul). Then he finds that wallowing in animalistic enjoyments does not gain for him his happiness, nor does it take him forward to his end goal. Thus, he has no alternative but to discard his desires and abandon his journey to his soul's crazes. He should be attracted to a cause or causes above the normal material ones, by going near it and joining it; this proximity and joining is achieved by submitting to him and surrendering to his orders. This is a spiritual and psychological affair that can be preserved through body's commissions and omissions—and these are the acts of religious worship like prayer, *ḥajj*, and so on.

The actions, regimes and various exercises prescribed by religion, ultimately return to a sort of involvement with affairs of the soul. Man sees by his nature that he neither takes nor leaves anything but for his own benefit. We have stated earlier that man is never oblivious—not for a single moment of his existence—of observing his soul and seeing his person, and that he never commits mistake in this perception at all; if there ever

occurs a mistake it does in its interpretation based on rational thinking and academic research. It is now clear from this discourse that religions and denominations, in spite of the differences in their customs and ways, do not intend except being involved with affairs of the soul in general, no matter whether they were aware of this fact or not.

Likewise, a man from among those who indulge in various regimes and spiritual exercises—even if they do not follow any religion nor they believe in reality of soul—do not aim through the said exercises except obtaining the promised result. And that promised result is not connected with commissions and omissions which he does, in a physical connection, as it appears between the physical causes and their effects; it is rather an immaterial connection emanating from (human) will, which is related to the exerciser's perception and will which are preserved by the sort of activity done by it, it extends from the soul of the exerciser to the promised result. Thus the reality of the said exercise is that it strengthens the soul and completes it in its perception and will for the said result. In other words, it is the effect of the exercise that the soul acquires the condition where it knows that the desired result is within its power. Thus when correct exercise is done and completed, the soul acquires the power that if it wishes to get the result unconditionally, or wishes it with certain conditions (as for example when a child is made to see a spirit in a mirror), that result will certainly appear.

To this aspect points the traditions narrated from the Prophet that the people said to him that some disciples of Jesus walked on water. The Prophet said, "If he had stronger conviction he would have walked on air." As you see, this tradition indicates that the whole affair depends on the conviction and certitude about God, when all creative causes are effaced and stripped of independent effectiveness. The greater the reliance of man on the absolute divine power, the greater the submission of worldly things to his will. Understand it.

The most comprehensive saying on this affair is the word of al-Ṣādiq: "The body does not feel weak from doing what the intention is strong about." Also the Prophet has said: "The actions are only according to intentions."

It is now clear that the religious effects of rites and worships as well as those (spiritual and psychological) exercises and regimes are related with

human soul only through its inner affairs. When one is engaged in any aspect of its, one is engaged in affairs of the soul.

A man deceives himself if he thinks that the relationship of cause-and-effect exists between the bodies of these good deeds and the goals of the next world; or between them and the strange worldly goals which are not affected by physical causes, like manipulating the souls' perceptions and their various kinds of will, setting things in motion without a mover; acquiring knowledge of hidden ideas of the others, or of things to appear in future; establishing connections with the spiritual world and spirits, etc.; or thinks that action engenders an effect without there being a real link between them, or merely by divine will without there being any particular reason.

Section 6

Be careful, lest you fall in error of deducing from above discussions that religion is but the cognition and Sufism, that is, cognition of the soul, as some materialist scholars have wrongly inferred, and have divided ways of life prevalent among the people into two branches: materialism and cognition that is, religion.

It is because what religion teaches is that there is a real happiness for man, which he cannot get except by surrendering to supernatural and refusal to concentrate on material enjoyments. And the preceding discourses have shown that religions, whichever they might be—right or wrong—use the reform of soul and its cleansing in an appropriate way, for training the people and leading them to the happiness which it promises them and calls them to. And where is this from the idea that cognizance of the soul is religion?

Religion calls man to the worship of God directly or through interceders and partners, because therein is found the human bliss and happiness and the good life which is the only goal of the man; and the man does not acquire it, and shall never acquire it, except through a pure soul which is cleansed of material connections and animalistic unbridled enjoyments. Thus the need arises to include reform of the soul and its cleansing among the parts of its call, in order that the one with that characteristics becomes ready to be covered with good and blessings; and does not become like someone who takes a thing with one hand and throws it away with

the other. Thus religion is one thing and cognizance of the soul is quite another, although religion is inseparable from cognizance to a certain extent.

This same discourse also makes it clear that the systems of exercises and regimens used for diverse and unusual goals too are separate from cognizance of the soul, although some are connected somehow with some others.

Of course, we may come to the conclusion that the cognizance of the soul—whatever the path taken to reach it—is a thing taken from religion. Also, independent research shows that the religions—with all their diversities and differences, have sprouted from one deep rooted religion to which the human nature invites, and it is the religion of monotheism.

Thus, when we refer to our simple nature, leaving aside the pre- judices which come to us by heredity or are transmitted from environment, we will know with certainty, without a shade of doubt, that the universe, with its unity in plurality, and interconnection of its parts in diversity, ends at the one cause above all causes, and it is the Truth to which one must submit and manage the life according to its teaching and management—and it is the Religion based on monotheism.

Deep consideration of all religions and customs makes us aware that all of them contain somewhat this living spirit (that is, monotheism), even idolatry and dualism; what discord there is, it is in fitting the religious system on this fundamentalism, and by hitting the target and missing it. For example, there are those who say: 'He is indeed nearer to us than our life-vein, and He is with us wherever we might be, we do not have beside Him any guardian or intercessor; therefore it is incumbent on us to worship Him alone without ascribing any partner to Him.' Also there are those who say: 'Man's earthly lowliness and baseness of his nature does not leave any way to him to establish any connection with the divine courtyard; what a distance there is between dust and the Lord of lords? Therefore, we have no alternative but to seek proximity with some of His honored servants, who are freed of the curtain of matter, are pure and cleansed from the dirt of nature, and they are the spirituality of the stars, or lords of species, or nearer humans, and we do not worship them except that they may make us nearer to God. However, because they are beyond our perceptions, far above our sides, it is necessary that we should represent them bodily in stones and idols, so that the matter of nearness in worship

may be completed.' The same is the case with all other religions and traditions; and we do not find in their books except that which shows in reality its direction towards divine monotheism.

It is well known that the customs prevalent among the people, no matter how many branches there may be in it and how much serious diversities may appear in it, are all inclined towards unity, when we retreat backwards to its earliest times, and it ultimately ends at the natural and simple human religion, and it is monotheism. Thus the religion of monotheism is the father of all religions, and these in their turn are its sons—good or evil.

Again, the natural religion looks into the cognizance of the soul only to use it to arrive at the human blessings to which it invites, and it is the cognizance of God which is its ultimate goal. In other words, religion invites to the cognizance of the soul as the way, not the destination. In fact, religious taste is not pleased with involvement in anything except in the way of servitude; verily the religion with God is the Islam, and He is not pleased with unbelief in His servants; therefore how can He be pleased with cognizance of the soul if it becomes an independently sought after end in itself?

It is seen from this that the cognizance ultimately ends at the natural religion, because it is not in itself an independent matter to which the human nature might be calling, until its branches and sprouts end at the one root, which is natural cognizance.

This fact may possibly be understood through another way: Although humanity proceeds by nature to civilization and grouping for blissfulness of the life, and reports and research have proved that some people or communities called their groups to the ways of nationalism, or laid down civil systems and enforced them among them, like the tribal customs, monarchical traditions, democratic systems and so on; but neither any report nor any research has claimed that during all the long human history anyone other than the people of religion had called to the cognizance of the soul and reform of its ethics.

Yes, it is possible that some adherents to those irreligious ways, like people of witchcraft and spiritualists, etc, might have awakened to this type of the cognizance of the soul through a path other than religion, yet they would not reach it through the nature, because nature has nothing to do or say in this matter, as you have seen; rather it would have been through

accidental observation of some unusual psychological effects; then his soul yearns to attain to a psychological position with which he can perform wondrous deeds and rare manipulations in the world which souls consider strange; this yearning pushes him to hunt for it and proceed to it stage by stage until the desired goal is achieved.

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Section 7

We are often told about many of our good people of religion that they had got, through their religious regimes, supernatural miracles and extraordinary events that were especially bestowed on them. For example, they could see something or affairs which were not seen by the others, or they could observe some people or episodes which were not perceived by other persons, or their prayers were answered, some hopelessly sick persons were cured, men were rescued from dangers and perils in other than usual way. Such things sometimes happen even on the hands of a person who is not virtuous, if his intention is true and his soul detached (from worldly involvements). These people see what they see but they are oblivious of its immediate cause, and they ascribe it directly to God without seeing any intermediary. Although ascription of the affairs and things to God is true and one has no alternative but to accept it, yet negation of intermediary cause cannot be coveted.

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Sometimes a spiritualist brings forth someone's spirit in a mirror or water and so on, by manipulating a child's soul—as is generally known—and he himself, like the others, observes that the child sees (that spirit) with his physical eyes, and that there is a curtain between the said spirit and the eyes of the others, and if that curtain was lifted off, the others too would be able like the child to see it.

Sometimes they find the procured spirit telling lies in its information, and it seems very strange, because the spiritual world is the one of purity and clarity; there is no way for lie, falsity and untruth to reach it. Sometimes they bring forth a living person's spirit and make it describe his secrets and inner thoughts, and that person is awake and engaged in his daily activities without realizing that his spirit has been procured and is disclosing what he is not pleased with its disclosure.

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Sometimes a person is put under hypnotic trance, and is directed to perform a deed and he in the same condition agrees to it. Then on waking

up, he performs the same deed with all the conditions told to him; yet he is not aware of what was taught to him, nor does he know that he had agreed to it.

Some spiritualists, after seeing some spiritual apparitions similar to human form or like an animal's, thought that these forms are parts of the material world and receptacles of ever changing nature. It especially applies to those who do not believe that any immaterial thing exists; so much so that some of them had tried to invent some artificial apparatus to catch the spirits. All this relied on a hypothesis which they had about the soul: that it has a material starting point, or is a characteristic of a material starting point, which acts with perception and will. However, they have not solved the question of life and perception even today.

Similar to it is the hypothesis of those who believe that spirit is a fine body, similar to the physical body in its forms and appearance. It is because they found that man sees himself in dream in the same form, which he sees of himself while awake. Sometimes the people exercising spiritual regimes see their own forms outside their bodies—and it looks totally similar to their bodies' form; so they said that spirit is a fine body which remains incarnated in the physical body as long as man remains alive; when it leaves the body it is death.

But they have failed to realize that this perceived form is found in the man's senses, like his form, which he perceives of his body, and like the forms of all extraneous things, which are separate from his body. Also, occasionally this separate form appears to some people of exercised regime as more than one, or in a form other than his own form; and sometimes he sees his soul exactly as soul of some another person. Now, if they do not say about the said form that it is the form of the spirit, they also should not say for a form, which is seen by people of exercised regime that it is the form of the spirit.

The fact is that these people did get a part of the cognizance of the soul, but they lost the cognizance of the soul's true nature as it is, so they erred in explanation of what they had got and went astray in directing its affair. However, the truth, to which the proof and experiment lead, is that the soul's true perceived nature which is referred to by the word, 'I', is a thing which is quite separate in its essence from these material things, as explained earlier; and its various perceptions and senses—feelings, thought

or understanding—inasmuch as they are perceived are settled in their own world and receptacle, other than the physical characteristics which appear in the organs of feeling and perception of the body, because they are material commissions and omissions and have no life or perception in themselves. So these affairs which are especially seen by good people and those who undergo spiritual exercises and regimes, are not beyond the grasp of their souls; the only question is: How did this cognizance settle in the soul and where in the soul is its place? And the soul has a sublime sign for all happenings and affairs which are somewhat connected to them. So all these strange affairs, which are compliant to the people of exercise and regime, are nourished by their will and intention; and intention emanates from perception. Thus, the human perception has some intervention in all events connected to, and all affairs touching him.

Section 8

Thus, it is proper to divide into two, the people who are generally involved in cognizance of soul: One, those who are engaged in it by acquiring some unusual effects of soul, which are beyond the circle of material cause-and-effect like the people indulging in magic and talisman, or those who subdue the spirituality of stars, jinn or men's spirits, or those who recite invocations or incantations.

Two, those who are engaged in cognizance of the soul by turning away from extraneous things and being attracted towards it for deeply thinking over it and observing its essence and conditions, like the Sufis in their various categories and paths.

Sufism is not something invented by the Muslims on their own. It is found even in those nations which had appeared before them, like the Christians and even the Hindus and Buddhists; there are in those religions even today those who proceed on this path; it is rather an hereditary way they have inherited from their ancestors.

However, it is not as the usual imitation as people inherit various types of civilization, one from the other, a later generation following in the footstep of an earlier one, as is believed by some researchers in religions and sects. You have seen in previous discourses that the natural religion leads to asceticism, and asceticism guides to the cognizance of the soul. When religion is settled in a nation and is firmly rooted in their hearts, it adapts

and prepares them for inevitable growth in them of the way of cognizance of the soul; and then follow it some of those people who are fully affected by its factors. Thus, if religious life continues for sometime in a nation, this way (of Sufism) is bound to appear among them, whether correct or incorrect, even if they remain totally cut off from other religious nations and groups. An affair of this type should not be counted as a hereditary custom, which is passed on from generation to generation.

Section 9

Now, we should further divide the second category of the people (that is, those who are engaged in cognizance of the soul) into two groups:

One group proceeds on this way for the soul's own sake, so they are given some of its knowledge, but they fail to get its comprehensive cognizance. It is because their only aim was to know the soul; so they remain oblivious of its Maker, and He is God, Great is His name, Who is the True Cause, Who takes the soul by its forelock in its existence and effects of existence. How can a man fully know a thing when he is oblivious of the knowledge of the causes of its existence? Especially the cause, which is the Cause of every cause? Is he but like someone who claims to have the knowledge of a bed while he is ignorant of the carpenter and his visit, does know nothing of his saw or the purpose of its making, and likewise other causes of the bed's existence.

This type of the soul's cognizance deserves to be called sooth saying, as it entails acquirement of a little information regarding the soul and its effects.

The other group goes ahead on the path of the soul's cognizance in order that it would lead to the cognizance of the Lord. This way of theirs is the one which religion is somehow pleased with. The man becomes engaged in the cognition of his soul because it is one of the signs of his Lord, and the nearest sign. The soul becomes the path trodden, and God is the destination towards which he proceeds: *and that to your Lord is the end goal* (53:42).

These are the different groups, having various beliefs. We do not have much information about the non-Muslims' views and of the paths they tread. As for the Muslims, they have got numerous paths, basic among them are counted to twenty five chains, and each of them is branched out